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THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

PERCEPTIONS OF LIFE QUALITY IN STRATHCONA COUNTY

by

ROBERT J. WILLS

A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH

IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE

OF MASTER OF SCIENCE

IN

RURAL SOCIOLOGY

DEPARTMENT OF RURAL ECONOMY

EDMONTON, ALBERTA

FALL, 1988

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Supervisor

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Date August 26, 1988

ABSTRACT

The objective of this study was to examine the resident perceptions of life quality in Strathcona County. To accomplish this objective an interview schedule was devised and subsequently administered to a random sample of County residents. The two major areas examined through the interview schedule involved (1) satisfaction with Strathcona County, and (2) perceptions of personal well-being. Analysis proceeded with the aid of both inter and intra-County comparisons. Both American and Albertan communities formed the basis for the inter-county comparisons. Four major resident groups including the Hamlet population, the Country Residential population, the Farming population and the residents of Sherwood Park, assumed the focus for the intra-county inquiry.

When satisfaction with Strathcona County was the dependant variable, the aggregate figures suggest an extremely satisfied county. Strathcona County reports a greater proportion of satisfied respondents than all other studies examined. Strathcona County residents also reported greater satisfaction with their neighborhoods than did the respondents from Edmonton, Fort Saskatchewan and Leduc. When intra-County comparisons formed the basis for evaluation, the Sherwood Park residents report the greatest satisfaction with the County followed by the Farm, Country Residential and Hamlet populations respectively.

Similar findings were reported when personal well-being was analyzed. The residents of Strathcona County report greater satisfaction with the various aspects of life than respondents from other studies. High levels were reported by County residents when overall satisfaction with life and the degree of life quality were analyzed. The intra-County comparisons of the personal well-being variable suggest results similar to the County satisfaction variable. However, when examining personal well-being the Farming sector reported the greatest proportion of satisfied respondents followed by the residents of Sherwood Park, the Country Residential sector and finally the Hamlet sector. Standard of life, close friendships, family relations and personal health were the most powerful predictors of overall satisfaction with life.

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Several individuals were vital to the educational experiences which have proceeded and accompanied the development of this document. To thank them all would require another document of this size, while to miss the most influential would be homologous to plagiarism. One of the most influential persons has been Dr. D.S. Gill, who has applied his understanding of the ideals of adult education with impeccable fashion through our many associations. I would like to thank you for supplying enough rope to hang myself as well as the timely advice which aided in cutting myself free. I would also like to thank the members of my Advisory Committee Dr L. Chase-Wilde and Dr. S. Mohsen and Dr. W. Phillips who have willing given their time for the betterment of my education. Your participation, comments and suggestions are greatly appreciated.

I am also indebted to Strathcona County for its assistance throughout the study. Doug Irwin, the manager of the *Recreation and Parks Department* and the rest of the staff are worthy of mention for their support in raising the project off the ground, their assistance with the typing of the interview schedule and their insistence on timelines which ultimately aided in completion of the document. Cheers to external motivation! The members of the Rural Economy computing staff were also helpful in aiding me through the mazes associated with the textforming chore. Thanks Judy for always answering just *one* more question.

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Of course my family also deserves mention. Without the shelter from the storm so willing provided by my parents; the love and teachings provided by my children Jasper, Booker and Mecah; coupled with the love and strength of my wife Marylou (who has always let me be myself no matter how trying that may be); I should never have made it this far. May our future years be as rewarding as the past ones!

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I. INTRODUCTION

A. Introduction

In less than three decades the phrase "Quality of Life" (henceforth QOL) has gained considerable reclame. In so doing it has traversed national boundaries and erased continental barriers to achieve global recognition. The phrase "katchestvo zhizni" is as common in the Soviet Union as "qualite de vie" is in France or "quality of life" is in North America.[1] QOL has also endeared itself to a broad spectrum of the population. The QOL phase is as popular in private small-talk of ordinary citizens as it is in scholarly discourse or political debate. In short, QOL has developed virtual omnipresence.

A possible reason behind the overwhelming interest in the QOL lies with the versatility of its application. Though the QOL phrase was originally developed to address the problems of urban decay and environmental decline, it has evolved to include all aspects of life and living. Moreover by addressing all aspects of life, it pertains to humanity as a whole and is therefore not confined to any particular socio-economic status. Regardless whether one is a corporate executive or an inmate of a penal institution, QOL assumes a major focus of one's daily affairs. As a result, QOL is virtually limitless in its application. QOL has been concomitantly employed as a bargaining tool for the lesser advantaged, a marketable concept for commercial enterprise, and a cornerstone of religious institutions.

In addition to versatility, QOL has developed considerable import merely as a result of its definition. The majority of the QOL definitions address *fundamental* aspects of human nature. One such definition describes QOL as "the totality of those goods, services, situations and states-of-affair which are delineated as constituting the basic nature of human life - the essential properties of life which are articulated as being needed or wanted".[2] Another definition suggests QOL is "the output of two aggregate input factors: physical (quantifiable goods, services, material wealth, etc.) and spiritual ('nonmeasurable' psychological factors such as esteem, self actualization, etc.)."[3] Though 'wants' have since been deleted from QOL definitions, QOL still concerns itself with the existential state and the totality of fulfilment derived therein. To address the concept of QOL is to address the wholeness of life; the actualization of the human potential; "the realization of the human in man."[4]

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[1] Szalai, A. 1980. "The Meaning of Comparative Research on the Quality of Life", in Szalia (ed) *The Quality of Life: Comparative Studies*. London: Sage Publications. p. 14.

[2] Harland, D. 1972. *Social Indicators Toward the Measurement of Quality of Life.* Ottawa: Department of Regional Economic Expansion. p.17.

Additional significance lies with the fact that QOL is fundamental to scientific inquiry. Whether one is interested in eradicating debilitating diseases, preserving untouched environments, or probing spiritual enlightenment, QOL remains at the base of researcher objectives. Given this realization one might expect a growth in QOL research to accompany the general interest in QOL. In reality, QOL research has proceeded at an alarming rate.[5] McCall has suggested this surge in the QOL research has grown from two distinct sources. They include (1) a general lack of satisfaction with what life has to offer, and (2) a desire to provide governments with "decision making measures of social progress."[6]

While the realization of the human potential is certainly worthy of sociological study, QOL issues have particular significance for the field of Rural Sociology. Since one of the major goals of the field is enhance the QOL of rural people[7], additional research in the area becomes a necessity.

At this point, most readers will realize that while the QOL phrase may have recent origins, the concern over the QOL issue is by no means a novel phenomenon. From the discussions of the early Greeks to the more recent suppositions of scholars such as John Stuart Mill, considerable energy has been expended on both the happiness and quality issues. Indeed, the plight of man has engaged the minds of the world's scholars since the beginning of time. More recently however, concern over QOL has moved beyond the minds philosophers, scholars and poets to the mandate of most governments. Milbrath addresses the continual concern with QOL by stating; "achieving the quality of life has been the implicit goal of nearly all societies for many centuries".[8] It is felt that the concern with QOL on the societal level is likely to intensify as more societies meet the basic needs of the majority of their citizens.

---

[3] Harwood, P. 1976. "Quality of Life: Ascriptive and Tesimonial Conceptualizations", *Social Indicators Research.* 3: p. 471.

[4] Dorbrinov, V. 1986. "Quality of Life Indicators and Models", *Bulgarian Academy of Science.* p. 238.

[5] A computer search of the Sociological Abstracts for a ten year period ending in 1987 produced a list of eight hundred and eighty-seven separate journal articles and/or conference papers dealing specifically with QOL.

[6] McCall, S. 1975. "Quality of Life", *Social Indicators Research.* 2: p. 229.

[7] Gill, D.S. "Notes on Sociology and Rural Sociology", unpublished paper, Edmonton: University of Alberta.

There is a paradox which befuddles the QOL issue. Despite its world-wide popularity, its celebrated status, and its attention from several fields of scholarly research, the QOL term has yet to secure a generally accepted definition. However with the passing of time (and the accompanying revisions needed to remain contemporary), the basic premises underlying the QOL concept have remained unchanged. Essentially, by addressing the QOL concept researchers are attempting to approach "the quiddity of human welfare and well-being".[9]

B. Background to the Problem

The residents of Strathcona County would appear no different from other North Americans in their quest for a quality life. This is evidenced by the fact that the QOL term seems to be appearing with a certain regularity in the County. During 1987 alone, the term QOL was cited at least seven times in the *Sherwood Park News* and was referred to on at least three different occasions during public meetings held in the County.[10] This interest does not appear to be subsiding, as the municipal government has moved a step beyond many other governing bodies by articulating the implicit and addressing the QOL in its Corporate Plan. The Corporate Plan states; "Strathcona County will advocate the personal, social and economic well-being of its residents and strive to attain the quality of life that reflects their ideals".[11] By establishing such a policy, the County has burdened itself with the fundamental chore of understanding the reflected ideals of County residents. This study attempts to address this very concern.

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[8] Milbrath J. 1979. "Policy Relevant Quality of Life Research" *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*. 444 p. 33.

[9] Szalai. 1979. op cit. p. 9.

[10] It was mentioned in the *Sherwood Park News* once in the March 27 edition (page A7), three times in the March 18 edition (pages A8 and A19), once on June 10 (Page A4) and on once October 14 (page A13).

[11] County of Strathcona, Strathcona County Corporate Plan. 1987. Sherwood Park.

After a cursory examination of the QOL literature one can understand such interest in Strathcona County. A study undertaken in 1983 revealed the fact that the residents of Strathcona County experience high service levels relative to communities of similar size.[12] QOL studies in the United States have reported high levels of satisfaction among its residents.[13] Similarly, studies on Canadian samples (Edmonton in particular), have provided evidence to suggest that Western Canadians are even more satisfied than their southern neighbors.[14] Furthermore, the size of communities within Strathcona County should house highly satisfied residents given that Elgin et. al. (1974) have discovered that communities the size of Sherwood Park are most likely to contain satisfied residents.[15] The fact that services and amenities of a much larger metropolis are only minutes away, may provide additional support to the satisfaction levels of County residents.

If one were to stop here the reader might conclude that all should be fine with life in Strathcona County. However there are also some intervening variables in Strathcona County which add considerable complexity. Much of this complexity rests with the fact that Strathcona County houses communities which identify with the various aspects of the rural-urban continuum.[16] The County includes those who reside in the highly urbanized setting of Sherwood Park along with those who make up the traditional farming community. To further complicate matters there is also a large contingent of the country residential, or the highly developed acreage subdivisions within rural areas. While changes in the last several

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[11](cont'd) p. D.85.

[12] Alberta Municipal Affairs. 1983. *Municipal Services in the County of Strathcona*, Edmonton.

[13] Rogers, W. L.and P.Converse "Measures of Perceived Overall Quality of Life" 1975. *Social Indicators Research*.V2: 127-52.

[14] Kennedy, L., Northcott, H. and C. Kinzel. 1977. *Quality of Life in Edmonton*. Edmonton: University of Alberta.

[15] Elgin, D. T., Logothetti, T. and S. Cox.. 1974. *City Size and the Quality of Life*. Washington: National Science Foundation.

[16] The rural-urban continuum is a concept employed to examine the degree of ruralness of a particular community. For a discussion of the concept refer to Chapter II.

years have fostered more homogeneity amongst the various groups, certain differences are still evidenced today. These differences ranging from the fear of crime [17] to educational aspirations [18], continue to be the focus of sociological inquiries.

Another interesting aspect of Strathcona County is the fact that it lies on the rural-urban fringe. Fuguitt (1963) describes the rural-urban fringe as a "zone of transition surrounding a city where urbanization influences land use and population changes, which result in alterations to the social organization of the farming communities".[19] In Fugitt's definition, the phrases 'zone of transition' and 'alteration to the social organization' immediately stand out. Perhaps these alterations in the social organization are at the crux of the internal conflicts which seem to surface on a regular basis in Strathcona County.

C. The Research Problem

On completion of a 1979 study examining the resident perceptions of Strathcona County, Thomas Burton suggested that "...the best characteristics of County living have to do with the quality of life".[20] In the years that have passed since the publication of this statement, QOL has received considerable patronage in the County of Strathcona. Yet many questions remain unanswered regarding the QOL in general, and the QOL in Strathcona County.

By examining the perceptions of the residents of Strathcona County, the author hopes to shed some light on the QOL issue as it relates to Strathcona County. Moreover he hopes to identify some the the factors which draw people to the urban fringe. In the final analysis, the author hopes to answer the following questions: What is it that produces the high/good QOL experienced by Strathcona County residents? More importantly, how do the residents themselves feel about the QOL in Strathcona County?

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[17] Krahn, H. et al "Fear of crime differences" *Rural Sociology* 48:133

[18] Spenner, K.I. 1978. "Achievement Ambitions" *Annual Review of Sociology*. 4:373-420.

[19] Fuguitt, G. 1963. "The City and the Countryside" *Rural Sociology* 28: 246

[20] Burton T. 1979. *Strathcona County: A Resident Survey*. Edmonton: Alberta. p. 67.

D. The Research Purpose and Objectives

The purpose of this study is to determine how the residents of Strathcona County perceive their QOL and through this determination, to arrive at some implications for maintaining and/or enhancing the QOL within Strathcona County.

In conjunction with this major purpose, several other objectives have also been established. The importance of the objectives to the overall study merits identification. The objectives in no particular order of significance are as follows:

1. To examine the resident perceptions of life quality according to location in the rural-urban fringe.
2. To examine the socio-demographic characteristics such as marital status, education, age, and gender in relation to their effect on the reported levels of life quality.
3. To examine the perceptions of life quality of Strathcona County residents in comparison to members of adjacent communities including Fort Saskatchewan, the City of Leduc and the City of Edmonton.
4. To determine the extent of resident satisfaction with the various services offered by Strathcona County.

E. Empirical Methods

The data for this study were collected from a telephone survey conducted in the County of Strathcona during the months of July and August 1987. In order to meet the above mentioned objectives, the interview schedule was devised and administered to the residents of Strathcona County. The interview schedule addressed three major focus areas including service delivery, QOL domains and global QOL.[21] Since budgetary constraints disallowed contact with every resident, a simple random sample was drawn from the entire County. A total of two hundred and thirty-one (231) interviews were completed with residents from four sectors of

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[21] Both domain-specific and global measures have traditionally been employed in the study of QOL. Basically, the domain-specific measures concern themselves with the particular aspects of life, while global measures examine life as a whole. For a more complete description of the concepts refer to Chapter II.

Strathcona County including (1) the country residential setor, (2) the farming sector, (3) the small hamlet sector, and (4) the hamlet of Sherwood Park. As a result of a scientific sampling technique the data which has been acquired can be extrapolated to the larger population.

F. Limitations of the Study

Perhaps the greatest limitation to the study is the complexity of the issue at hand. When examining any study on the QOL one is quickly confronted by the complex nature of the proble[illegible]s well as the complexity of many of the proposed solutions. This is not alarming given the issue under study. Essentially, when undertaking a study on QOL one attempts to place value and meaning on life itself. While this is an arduous task, it is also a very important one and thus one which countless individuals are willing to pursue. As such QOL is a phenomenon which has received attention from a number of different disciplines. A 1980 UNESCO document describes at least eight major fields of study associated with research on the QOL.[22] As no particular field has assumed total control of the QOL research, any approach which is not interdisciplinary will undoubtedly leave certain aspects untouched. As this study has largely focussed on a sociological analysis to the problem, it should be considered as proceeding along the confines of a unidimensional approach. An example of this limitation lies in the fact that while a few psychological aspects have been incorporated into the study, the approach has far from exhausted this group of considerations.

Another limitation of the study is one which is commonplace during any attempt at quantifying a qualitative variable. Namely, the concern over the reliability and validity of the data. Though the reliability and the validity of subjective analysis have been adequately addressed in the QOL literature[23], the measurement of personal well-being still has its critics.[24] To address this concern the researcher has utilized one available option. He has employed questions which have been tested through other studies and thus deemed both reliable and valid by other researchers.

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[22] Solomon et al. 1980. "UNESCO 'S Policy Relevant Quality of Life Research Program", in Szalia (ed) *The Quality of Life: Comparative Studies*. London: Sage Publications.: 224-233.

[23] Atkinson, T. "The Stability and Validity of Quality of Life Measures" *Social Indicators Research*. 10: 113-132.
Andrews, R. et al. 1976. "The Validity of Measures of Self-Reported Well-Being" *Social Indicators Research* 3: 1-19.

The final limitation, concerns the age restrictions employed for the study. In order to obtain comparative results only residents over seventeen years of age were selected for this research. As a result of this sampling restriction the author has eliminated a major portion of the Strathcona County population by failing to address youths and adolescents. While this limitation is certainly not unique to this study, it remains worthy of mention. Basically, since QOL pertains to humanity as a whole, younger persons be included and addressed. Moreover, the inclusion of these age groups may have altered the results. Of course the ever present problems of time and budget have also made their presence felt on this study.

G. Outline of the Thesis

Chapter II provides the reader with an understanding of the literature surrounding the issues under study. Included in the literature review are sections on the concepts of the rural-urban continuum and the rural-urban fringe. Since previous studies have provided certain clues into the well-being of fringe dwellers, it is imperative that this information be considered. The literature surrounding the QOL concept is also reviewed in this chapter.

In attempting to study the QOL of any community, it is imperative that one identify the social milieu in which the problem occurs. As such, the third chapter of this thesis is devoted to describing the socio-economic conditions of Strathcona County. Included in this chapter are descriptions of the historic development of the County, as well as some of the more recent trends in the demographic makeup of it's residents. These socio-demographic characteristics form the basis for the objective indicators of the County QOL.

Chapter IV deals exclusively with the methods and procedures used in conducting the study. A comprehensive discussion of the the sampling procedure, the construction of the interview schedule and a description of the resulting sample provide the main focus of the chapter. Incorporated in the description of the sample is a discussion concerning demographic characteristics such as age, gender, family size, and place of residence, Also included are socio-economic concerns such as education, income and occupation.

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[24] Scheussler, K. F. and A. Fisher. 1985. "Quality of Life Research and Sociology" *Annual Review of Sociology*. 11: 129-149.

As QOL is often considered as a function of the experiences that people have in everyday life, Chapter V analyzes the findings which revolve around specific domains. This chapter concerns itself with levels of satisfaction obtained from the various services offered by the County. Services such as police, fire, health and ambulance are analyzes along with reported satisfaction levels of the services such as recreation, parks, family and community services as well as a school services. The analysis revolves around comparisons both within and between the services.

The following chapter (Chapter VI), deals with the reported QOL of County residents. This chapter incorporates some of the issues which were highlighted through the Burton Study, as well as an analysis of the questions focussing on the perceptions of personal well-being. For comparative purposes the chapter includes data from a number of other studies. These studies include the 1984 Edmonton Area Survey, the 1979 Edmonregional Planning Survey, the 1984 Alberta Parks and Recreation Survey, the Flanagan Study on QOL, and the surveys addressed by Marans and Dillman in their analysis of the QOL in rural America. The reader may refer to the reference list for the bibliographic information on these studies.

Chapter VII provides the reader with a summary of the entire study. It is also in this chapter where the major conclusions are addressed. In addition to providing the reader with the study's conclusions, the author also attempts to make some suggestions regarding future research.

II. THEORETICAL AND EMPIRICAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR STUDYING QUALITY OF LIFE

A. Introduction

The literature surrounding the QOL concept contains a multitude of apparent contradictions. Melton addresses one such contradiction when he states that; "even when people were migrating away from the rural areas in droves, the predominate view was that the quality of life was better in nonmetropolitan areas."[25] This contradiction, as well as many others, hold grave consequences for research of this nature. Two of the most important controversies concern themselves with the theoretical understanding the concepts involved. It is imperative that before any analysis on the QOL in Strathcona County is undertaken, two essential concepts must operationally defined. These two concepts include (1) rurality, and (2) QOL!

The task of operationally defining these two concepts is not as simple as it may seem. Proof for this statement lies with the fact that much of the current literature has consciously avoided such definitions merely as a result of their difficult nature. For the purposes of this study, the author shall address the issueby focussing on the literature surrounding the concepts of rurality and QOL. The initial sections will address rurality by focussing on the rural-urban continuum and the rural-urban fringe. Since Strathcona County contains such a diverse range of settlement patterns, it is felt that both of the above concepts have direct applica~~bilit~~y in this study.

During the discussion of the QOL concept the author will proceed with a practical approach, selecting only the appropriate and applicable literature from the voluminous materials. Included in this review are sections dealing with (1) the definitions of QOL, (2) the measurement of QOL (including both subjective and objective measures), and (3) the theoretical foundations for the concept. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the relationship between QOL and socioeconomic variables such as marital status, age, income and educational achievement.

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[25] Melton, 1983. "Ruralness as a Psychological Construct" in Childs and Melton (eds) *Rural Psychology.* New York: Plenium Press. p 1.

B. Rurality

According to the *Oxford Concise Dictionary* rural is defined as "of or relating to the country, country people or agriculture".[26] However relying on definitions such as this should only lead us further down the path of ambiguity, as the terms 'country' and 'country people' inevitably require further clarification. As an alternative to this approach the author will proceed with the traditional sociological discussions of rurality.

Since rurality is ubiquitous to the discipline of Rural Sociology, a tremendous amount of energy has been expended in attempting to define it. Despite this energy, no generally accepted definition is yet to emerge. The majority of the discussion which has taken place appears to established itself in two rather distinct camps, including the quantitative and the qualitative approaches.[27] Quantitative definitions rely on previously defined criteria such as the total population or the population densities. Conversely, the qualitative approaches emphasize differentiation according to socio-organizational aspects such as attitudes toward social change, patterns of social interaction, and/or other aspects of social structure.

One of the most recent attempts at defining rural was undertaken by Miller and Luloff (1981) who employed a combination of the aforementioned methods with a typological approach. Included in their three criteria approach is an ecological, an occupational and a socio-cultural dimension. During their discussions of the concept of rurality, these authors propound that while "features such as religion, income and age are perhaps most central to the composite definition"[28], neither the ecological or the occupational dimension can be ignored. Furthermore, by employing this multivariate model Miller and Luloff achieved a success rate of 90 percent when classifying individuals on the cultural subdimensions. As a result of their success, they contend that this multivariate model is the only realistic method of truly defining rurality.

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[26] *Oxford Concise Dictionary*. 1976. Springfield, Mass.: G. & C. Merriam Company. p. 1990.

[27] Dibner, A. S. 1983. "Is There a Psychology of the Rural Aged?", in Childs and Melton (eds.) *Rural Psychology*. New York: Plenum Press.

[28] Miller, M. K. and A. E. Luloff. 1981. "Who is Rural? A Topological Approach to the Examination of Rurality", *Rural Sociology*. 46: p. 621.

The Rural-Urban Continuum

The rural-urban continuum is a concept which relies on a typological approach and has been used to define the various aspects of rurality, or the degree of ruralness of a particular community. While it is the result of recent developments, the rural-urban continuum appears to have its origins in the antithetical analysis of human society. Undoubtedly the greatest contributor to the antithetical approach was Ferdinand Tonnies who used it to fashion his analysis of German society during the late eighteen hundreds. During his study Tonnies concluded that the interpersonal relations, as well as the norms which govern these relations, could be divided into the polar extremes of Gemeinschaft and Gesellschaft.[29] In making these 'ideal' distinctions Tonnies also suggested that the country and the city populations would be represented by various degrees by the two distinctions. He also alluded to the fact that rural areas are more likely to be representative of Gemeinschaft, while the city population is more likely to be representative of its antithesis, or Gesellschaft characteristics.

In conjunction with Tonnies several other authors also began to explore the social entities concept through the use of an antithetical approach. Included in this list are such notable sociologists as Durkheim, Weber, Becker and Parsons.[30] While each of these scholars employed adapted versions, they all continued to emphasize the idealistic nature of their approaches such that no real society could fall within the confines of a particular typology. Talcott Parsons was particularly significant in the development of a continuum by designing the "Five Pattern Variables" in response to what he saw as the weakness of the polar extreme approaches which were utilized by his predecessors. The the rural-urban continuum has evolved from Parsons' logic as it attempts to explore the the gradation between two extremes.

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[29] Tonnies, F. 1957. *Gemienschaft and Gesellschaft.* (translated by: Charles P. Loomis),New York: Harper and Row.

[30] As discussed in Tonnies, Ibid.

The actual development of the rural-urban continuum has been traced to Sorokin and Zimmerman and their early works entitled *Principles of Rural and Urban Sociology*.[31] In this study the authors propound that the rural-urban continuum is at once, a scientific and rational response to " a complex and uninterrupted series of phenomena".[32] Essentially the authors postulate that a causal link exists between the concept of rural, or the relative degree of ruralness, and the peculiarities of social action. In making this assumption they contend that the major purpose of the rural-urban continuum is to provide a "description of the differential characteristics of the rural and urban community whose totality gives the type of each of these soial aggregates".[33]

More recent application of the rural-urban continuum has come from Redfield among others. He utilized the continuum approach in attempting to understand urban society through an exploration of its counterpart, the 'folk society'.[34] While the criticism which has befallen Redfield is well known, the majority of this criticism revolves around Redfield's description of a 'folk society' rather than the use of a continuum when explaining the differences between the various constructs.

Smith and Zopf (1970) have also been strong proponents of the rural-urban continuum for the study of rural society. In addition to the works of Sorokin and Zimmerman, their analyses also appears to be influenced by Durkheim, as evidenced by the inclusion of a social solidarity variable. With this and other additions the rural-urban continuum has expanded to include occupational, environmental, density, social mobility, direction of migration, social interactions, and social differentiation dimensions.[35]

While the rural-urban continuum has been afforded considerable praise, it is certainly not without its critics. Much of the criticisms deals with the perceived inadequacy of a single entity when examining the complexity of the differences among various communities. Paul Hatt (1952) an early critic, criticized the concept by stating that in order to understand the differences among rural and urban communities one may have to employ a number of continuums.[36] More recent critics, while taking a similar approach, have been considerably more harsh than Hatt. Buttel and Newby (1980) fall into this category by describing the rural-urban continuum as a "thinly-veiled expression of nineteenth-century perspectives ..."[37] Their criticisms are based largely on the earlier comments provided by Glass (1966), Pahl (1966), and McGee (1971). Each of these authors have considered the rural-urban continuum as an over zealous attempt at differentiating among communities based on "fallacious assumptions of the nature of rural and urban society".[38] They also contend that the pro-rural bias may be at the crux of these false assumptions.

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[31] Sorokin, P. and G. C. Zimmerman. 1929. *Principles of Rural and Urban Sociology*. New York: Holt, Reinhart and Winston, Inc.

[32] *Ibid*. p. 15.

[33] *Ibid*. p. 15.

[34] Redfield, R. 1947. "Rural Sociology and the Folk Society", *Rural Sociology*. 8: 68-71.

[35] Smith, T. L. and P. E. Zopf. 1970. *Principles of Rural Sociology*. Philadelphia, PA.: F. A. Davis Company.

While the criticism of the continuum has often been quite severe, most of the critics have agreed that a continuum (or some adapted version of it), remains worthy of study in the field of sociology. Dewey (1960) despite being one of its harshest critics, echoes these sentiments when he emphatically states that he does not wish to "seek its elimination".[39] Others such as Ommen (1966), and Lupri (1965) suggest that a more complex version of the rural-urban continuum may solve the dilemma. Additional support for some type of rural and urban classification scheme comes from Pahl himself when he concedes that there should be a continued examination of the "relationships between the small scale and the large scale as an important field of study".[40] To meet the complexity of the issue, Pahl suggests a complex mesh of several rural-urban continuums.

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[36] Hatt, P. "Discussions of: The Sociological Significance of the Rural-Urban Fringe by Lively et. al.", *Rural Sociology.* 18: 117-118.

[37] Buttel, F. and H. Newby. 1980. *The Rural Sociology of Advanced Societies: Critical Perspectives.* Montclair, N. J.: Allenheld Osman. p. 6.

[38] McGee, T. G. 1971. *The Urbanization Process in the Third World.* London: G. Bell and Sons. p. 43.

[39] Dewey, R. 1960. "The Rural-Urban Continuum: Real but Relatively Unimportant", *American Journal of Sociology.* 6: p. 66.

[40] Pahl, R. E. 1967. "The Rural-Urban Continuum: A Reply to Eugen Lurpri", *Socioligia Ruralis* 7: p. 24.

The Rural-Urban Fringe

The rural-urban fringe, the urban fringe and the rurban fringe are a few terms which have been applied to the zone which surrounds metropolitan areas. Interestingly enough Statistics Canada has recently seen the need to differentiate among the various fringes through attempts to define both the "rural fringe"and the "urban fringe".[41] Essentially the concept of the fringe appears to have arisen out the pressures of suburbanization and the changes which accompanied such major shifts in population. In any case, the rural-urban fringe provides one of the more interesting applications of the rural-urban continuum and has actually been developed in conjunction with the continuum.

The earliest reference to the rural-urban fringe dates back to 1937 and T. Lynn Smith's study of population, where he describes the rural-urban fringe as the "built up area just outside the corporate limits of the city".[42] Wehrewein was to extrapolate on Smith's definition when he described the rural fringe as "the area of transition between the well recognized urban land uses and the area devoted to agriculture".[43] It is interesting to note that Wehrewein's definition, despite being developed in the forties, is not far from the definition which has endured to this day. This seems rather remarkable given the amount of study devoted to the rural-urban fringe. The definition which has been chosen to for the purposes of this study is one suggested by Glen Fuguit who considers the rural-urban fringe as "the zone of transition surrounding a city where urbanization influences land use and population changes, which result in changes in the social organization of the farming communities." [44] Of particular significance in this definition is the concentration on the transitional nature of the fringe. This concept of transition is evident in the ecological, the economical, as well as the geographical and the sociological literature.

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[41] The **rural fringe** is defined as "all the area within the census metropolitan area or census agglomeration lying outside the urban area". The **urban fringe** is an "urban area within metropolitan area or census agglomeration, but outside the urban core" Census Canada. 1987. Reference Dictionary. p. 130.

[42] Smith, T. L. 1937. *Population Analysis.* New York: McGraw Hill. p. 34.

[43] Wehrewein, G.S. 1942. "The Rural-Urban Fringe", *Economic Geography.* 18: 217-228.

[44] Fuguitt, G. 1976. as quoted in Brewka, K. 1983. "Part-time Farming in the Rural-Urban Fringe", Edmonton: Unpublished Masters Thesis, University of Alberta. p. 9

While geographers may have provided the initial impetus to the study of the rural-urban fringe, sociologist were not long in recognizing the social impacts of such a phenomenon. Rodehaven[45] (1947) and Beegle[46] (1947) were two of the first sociologists to show an interest in the social organization of settlement in the fringe areas. However like Firey (1946), their analysis assumes an ecological perspective rather than concentrating on sociocultural considerations. Firey was particularly scathing in his discussions of the fringe when he focussed his analysis on the magirrality of the rurban fringe, further ascertaining that the fringe area might best be described as a "institutional dessert".[47] The *McNally Report* which focussed on the Edmonton area during the 1950's confirms the marginality of the fringe by suggesting that these areas are "almost entirely dormitories of the lower cost housing ... are more hard pressed financially than the cities".[48] Obviously, these descriptions are slightly outdated as the fringe areas have moved to the opposite end of the financial spectrum. While both Rodehaven and Beegle were less drastic than the above mentioned authors, they too appear more concerned with the settlement patterns than sociological concerns.

During the early fifties the rural-urban fringe gained considerable import as many scholars attempted to address the appropriateness of the concept. This emphasis was paralleled by a new phase in the urbanization process; namely the assertion of suburbia. Perhaps the most provocative study into this area was written in 1953 by Walter Martin, who viewed the the rural-urban fringe as an area of considerable interest to the entrepreneur, the planner, and the social scientist. Martin also considered the sociologists' interests as limitless given the incredible diversity of persons and interpersonal relationships within the fringe community.[49]

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[45] Rodehaven, M. W. 1947. "Fringe Settlement as a Two-Directional Movement", *Rural Sociology.* 12: 49-57.

[46] Beegle, J. 1947. "Characteristics of Michigan's Fringe Population", *Rural Sociology.* 12 254-263.

[47] Firey, W. I. 1946. "Ecological Considerations in Planning for the Rurban Fringes", *American Sociological Review.* 2: p. 412.

[48] *McNally Report* as quoted in "Structure of Government Documentation 1956-1978". p. 42.

Other authors have not placed as much emphasis on the concept. Lively (1952) focussed on the sociological significance of the rural-urban fringe by proposing three possible lifestyles scenarios. Each of these lifestyles was basically a hybrid of that day's rural and urban lifestyles. Still others such as Angell[50] and Blizzard [51] addressed the rural-urban fringe from the perspective of both the ruralite and the urbanite, ultimately focussing their analysis on the degree of acculturation which appeared to be taking place.

Critics of the concept also emerged. Once again they based their arguments on the logic which had been employed by the critics of the the rural-urban continuum; namely the lack of causality between one's social actions and their location in the rural-urban fringe. Blizzard (1951) was typical of these critics as he contended that the fringe concept had over emphasized the aspect of transition and continually revolved around land use issues rather than sociocultural considerations.[52]

During the last two decades the rural-urban fringe has continued to make its presence felt in the sociological literature. Since the aforementioned studies were undertaken, studies ranging from the effects of the fringe on church participation[53] to part-time farming within the fringe[54] have been at the focus of such interest. Despite this interest, Haigh (1978) suggests that a considerable portion of the sociocultural characteristics remain unmeasured largely as result of their evasive nature.[55]

While the historical evidence suggests the rural-urban fringe has been examined from a number of perspectives, in most cases the researchers appear to be addressing a common concern. Angell (1951) eloquently articulated this concern when he stated that the research into the rural-urban fringe should "study the various types of fringe situations and determine under what conditions the creative solutions to the problems of adjustment between the rural and urban worlds are emerging".[56] Given this realization it might be wise to focus on the social aspects of the fringe, for as Martin has suggested; "there is general awareness of the role played by various social and cultural factors in relation to the desirability of resident location".[57] Indeed, analysing the nature of these social and cultural factors assumes the major focus of this particular study.

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[49] Martin, W. 1953. *The Rural-Urban Fringe*. Eugene: University of Oregon.

[50] Angell, R. C. 1951. "Discussions of: The Sociological Significance of the Rural-Urban Fringe, The Urban View", *Rural Sociology*. 18: 119-120.

[51] Blizzard, S. W. 1952. "Discussions of: The Sociological Significance of the Rural-Urban Fringe, The Rural View", *Rural Sociology*. 18: 118-119.

[52] *Ibid*.

[53] Schaffer, A. "The Rural Church in a Metropolitan Area", *Rural Sociology*. 24: 236-245.

[54] Brewka. 1983. op cit.

[55] Haigh, R. "Urban Fringe Residents Characteristics", Edmonton: Unpublished Masters Thesis, University of Alberta.

C. The Quality of Life

The term QOL, while evading a clear cut and generally accepted definition, is a term which has endeared itself to many people in a remarkably brief period of time. Szalai (1980) has traced the use of the term from the eastern block countries such as the Soviet Union and Hungary, through Asia and Africa, to both Europe and North America. He has suggested this world wide popularity is a phenomenon which has basically arisen since the early seventies, further substantiating this belief through an extensive review of encyclopedias.[58] Despite its relative newness, the term QOL is no stranger to social science research. A tremendous amount of effort has been exerted in QOL definitions, QOL measures, and QOL applications. One result of this research is the belief that this intensified interest in the QOL area has subsided and QOL research has begun to wane.[59] The following sections will address the more applicable aspects of this QOL research.

Historical Review of the Quality of Life Concept

Hundreds of years ago, Kitto was convinced that the difficult tasks of operationally defining and empirically testing QOL could be accomplished through a few very simple tests. He suggested that a person's life would have an adequate degree of quality if he could (1) beat a braggart in the discuss throw, (2) out-race a steed, and (3) be moved to tears by a song.[60] While the appropriateness of these classifications are less than adequate for today's societies, it does provide an interesting anecdote into the history of the QOL dilemma.

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[56] Angell, 1951. op cit. p. 119.

[57] Martin. 1953. op cit. p. 23.

[58] Szalai,. 1980 op cit.

[59] Andrews, F. 1986. *Research on the Quality of Life.* Ann Arbour: The University of Michigan.

Most authors interested in the history of the QOL term have traced the phrase to the early sixties and its use in popular debates concerning environmental decline and urban decay. Of particular notoriety is a quote by the late President Lyndon Johnson when he described the "great society" accordingly; "Thus the Great Society is concerned not with how much, but with how good - not only with the quantity of goods, but with the quality of our lives".[61] While this and other Lyndon Johnson quotes has been cited as an example of the term's first usage, the concept itself is much farther reaching. McCall (1972) has suggested that certain aspects of the QOL research have not advanced much since the time of Kitto and other early Greeks. [62] Other aspects have witnessed considerable study, with early research completed by a number of early sociologists. While they may not employ the phrase QOL *per se*, their objectives are clearly along the same lines as the present day research. Three of the most notable studies include Thorndike (1937), Burgess et al. (1939) and Ogburn (1937). Since these studies have been completed the QOL research has advanced at a rapid pace, with as many as twelve different disciplines directly involved with the topic.[63] This is understandable given the brevity of the term and the fact that it basically "covers all aspects of living as it is experienced by individuals". [64]

Defining Quality of Life

Several attempts have been made at defining the concept of QOL, with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency at the forefront of such definitions. Despite a concerted effort to scientifically understand the concept (and thus provide technical meaning), much of the criticism afforded the area continues to revolve around a lack of specificity. Szalai (1980) provides a perfect example of the evasive nature of many researchers when he states that other researchers should "accept 'quality of life' as a single indivisible generic term and attribute at first some vaguely circumscibed meaning to it that can be subsequently clarified and specified by more research and reflection".[65] Unfortunately despite a tremendous amount of reflection and research since this statement, no generally accepted definition has yet to evolve.

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[60] As quoted in Prisig, R. 1977. *Zen and the Art of Motorcyle Maintenance.* New York: Batam Books.

[61] Campbell, A. 1981. *The Sense of Well-Being in America.* New York: McGraw-Hill. p. 4.

[62] McCall, 1975 "Quality of Life" *Social Indicators Research.* 2: 229-248. In this article he suggests that the discussion of happiness is one area which has not advanced since Plato.

[63] Solomon et al., 1980. op cit.

[64] Szalai. 1980. op cit. p. 14.

In their attempts at defining the concept of QOL researchers have generally proceeded with one of two major approaches. The first approach focusses on the semantics of the phrase and individual analysis of its parts. Baier (1972), McCall (1974), and Szalai (1980) are a few authors who have proceeded along these lines. The result of this study appears to be a greater consensus as to the definition of 'quality' than as to the word 'life'. Generally the term 'quality' has been taken to represent a gradation from high to low or worse to better, while 'life' has been considered as mental life.[66]

The other major impetus into defining the term has focussed on the pursuit of needs through a need-arousal mechanism.[67] While many people have defined human needs and proposed classification schemes, Dobrianov (1986), Hankiss (1976), Mallman (1975), and Mchale (1977) have been particularly prevalent in the study of QOL through needs pursuit. Commonplace among the above studies, if not the central focus, is the formidable works of Abraham Maslow. Dobrinov is certainly noticeable in his Maslovian terminology by considering QOL to be "the degree of satisfaction of natural, spiritual and social needs". [68]

While most definitions of the QOL have been influenced by the aforementioned impetuses, other authors have considered alternative measures in defining the QOL. Drietzel (1974) is one individual who has focussed on the quality of the infrastructure as an indication of the QOL. Baier (1972) is another scholar who considers QOL to be an exogenous variable, dependent primarily upon environmental conditions. He contends that the evaluating properties such as "optimal-life-advancement" opportunities are central to the community QOL.[69] However both these definitions, while being interesting, focus more on meaning than operationality.

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[65] Szalai. 1980. op cit. p. 9.

[66] Scheussler, K. F. and A. Fisher. 1985. "Quality of Life Research and Sociology", *Annual Review of Sociology*. 11: 129-149.

[67] Ibid.

[68] Dobrinov. 1986. op cit. p. 258.

For the purposes of this study the author has chosen to pursue the QOL issue through a dual definitional process. The theoretical foundation will rest on Dobrinov as he describes the QOL as "the degree of realization of the human in man, achieved in social and natural conditions worthy of him".[70] For an operational definition the work of Korte (1983) will be employed. He defines QOL as "an overall evaluation of life as experienced by the individual or group of individuals".[71] The emphasis on evaluation and thus subjectivity, has been consciously sought. For as Rogers and Converse (1986) have testified "QOL refers at least in part to the way the individuals perceive and evaluate their own lives".[72]

Quality of Life Measurement

As the fields of QOL and Social Indicators share common roots, there are some striking similarities in their terminology. The use of indicators as measurement tools is perhaps the most obvious example of these commonalties. Traditionally, the QOL research has depended on both objective and subjective indicators with objective indicators aligning themselves with social indicators merely as a result of a concentration on the presumed linkage between environmental conditions and QOL. The subjective indicators have concerned themselves with personal evaluation and one's fulfillment, satisfaction or happiness of everyday life.[73] The following provides a brief overview of both measurement tools.

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[69] Baier, K. 1974. "Towards a Definition of Quality of Life" in Clarke And List (eds) *Environmental Spectrum*. Toronto: D. Van Nostrand Co.

[70] op cit. p. 234.

[71] Korte, C D. 1983. "The Quality of Life in Rural and Urban America", in Childs and Melton (eds.) *Rural Psychology*. New York: Plenum Press.

[72] Rodgers, W. L. and P.E. Converse. 1975. "Measures of Perceived Overall Quality of Life", *Social Indicators Research*. 2: p. 127.

[73] Schuessler et al. 1985. op cit.

Before embarking on this discussion it is imperative that the reader be made aware of the difficulty in differentiating between the two measures. Some authors contend that such differentiations can be misleading and actually inappropriate in the study of social development.[74] Others have called for the complete elimination of the objective-subjective distinction. [75] Still other believe that these subjective and objective measures encompass only a fraction of the necessary indicators.[76] With these limitations in mind, the author has proceeded with a diagnostic approach of the QOL measures.

Objective Indicators

The framework for the objective measurement of the QOL has come from the social indicators research which in turn, has evolved out of the apparent limitation of economic indicators as determinants of social welfare.[77] In attempting to overcome these limitations the social indicators movement created complimentary measures including normative welfare indicators, satisfaction indicators, and descriptive social indicators. Of these measures, the descriptive social indicators apply directly to the objective measurement of QOL.[78]

Ogburn's early attempts at understanding social trends appear to have laid the foundation for descriptive social measures. Bradburn (1966), Duncan (1969) as well as Sheldon and Parke (1971) have extrapolated on his approach by suggesting that quantitative measures of social conditions are essential to the scientific understanding of any society. In so doing they have laid the framework for the development of an index analysis when ascertaining a community's social condition. More recent studies have explored further the index concept through statistical treatment of areas such as health, housing, safety, schooling and social participation.[79] Essentially, the authors attempt to provide bonafide descriptions through quantitative characteristics of the population under study.

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[74] Miles, I. 1985. *Social Indicators for Human Development.* London: Francis Pinter.
[75] Andrews, F. M., and S. B. Whitney. 1976. *Social Indicators of Well-Being: American's Perceptions of Life Quality.* New York: Plenum Press.
[76] Rossi et al. 1980. op cit.
[77] Gross,B. M. 1966. The State of the Nation. In (ed) R. A. Bauer. *Social Indicators.* Cambridge, MA. MIT. 154-271.
[78] Land, K. C. 1980. "Social Indicators", *Annual Review of Sociology.* 9: 1-26.
[79] For examples of these studies see Flax (1972), Lui (1975) and Smith (1973).

In his discussion of descriptive indicators Land (1983) contends that they generally assume one of four major forms. These forms include:

> (a) state occupancy rates - indexes of the prevalence of social state in the population (eg. percent of the population that is disabled); (b) transition rates - rates of transition between social states (eg. the probability of surviving from age x to age $x + 1$); (c) occurance/exposure rates (eg. the number of births per 1000 females aged 15-44) or ratios (eg. the probability of deaths within a given year attributable to a particular cause); (d) indexes summarizing population or subpopulation data in forms *a, b, or c* (median family income in constant dollars).[80]

Though it is not implicit that all descriptive indicators be of the objective nature, the majority of them do fall within this realm.[81] When these objective indicators are employed, the authors attempt to set targets for social development. More explicitly, they established "target or output variables towards change in some public policy".[82] Though many of these attempts have produced rather short-lived measures, one index which has endured is the Physical Quality of Life Index or the PQLI. The PQLI compares the degree of development of various countries through statistics such as life expectancy, infant mortality, and literacy.[83] Despite the criticisms which have been levied against the approach, the index has maintained a certain degree of respectability.

While environmental concerns have received considerable attention from the objective analyses, perhaps the most ambitious implementation of the objective indicators in the study of QOL has come from Liu and his numerous studies on the QOL of the American population.[84] Unfortunately Liu has received a great deal of criticism for his insistence on unidementional analysis. In the final analysis it is apparent that while objective conditions obviously have implications to the study of QOL, the "objective measures by themselves are of questionable value".[85] Given this realization, it appears the most important contribution to be made by the objective indicators is their linkage with the psychological state of the group under study.

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[80] Land. 1983. op cit. p. 6.

[81] Miles, 1985. op cit.

[82] Land. 1983 op cit. p. 4

[83] Miles, 1985. op cit.

[84] Liu. 1975. op cit.

[85] Rossi R.J. and K.J. Gilmartin. 1980. *The Handbook of Social Indicators.* New York: Garland Press.

Subjective Indicators

The subjective indicators while gaining considerable momentum during the last decade, have grown largely from the fields of Sociology and Social Psychology. Paramount to this approach are the works of Campbell, Converse and Rogers (1976)[86] as well as Andrews and Whitney.[87] While the aforementioned works may not have been the initial works in the area, they have both been extremely influential in spawning further research.

Essentially the subjective measures have evolved from the emphasis on 'psychological man' and her pursuit of personal well-being. The measures which have been employed to identify this personal well-being construct focus on the use of the terms happiness, satisfaction and fulfillment through personal evaluation. While considerable energies have been expended in attempts to substantiate one or the other of the terms, the initial decision to employ a particular construct appeared to rest with personal preference. However with further study, satisfaction appears to have surfaced as the most appropriate terminology.[88] This is not to suggest that happiness and fulfilment are inconsequential, as both measures continue to be employed in the study of QOL. Moreover, others have also attempted to link two of the terms. McCall is one example when he suggests that a person's satisfaction is a function of their 'happiness requirements'.[89] Michalos (1980) is another who analyzes the QOL issue through the use of both the concepts.[90]

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[86] Campbell, A., Converse, P. and W. L. Rogers. 1976. *The Quality of American Life.* New York: Russel Sage.

[87] Andrews and Whitney. 1976. op cit.

[88] Early support for the term came from Campbell et al. (1976) who preferred the satisfaction construct largely as a result of its greater implications on policy decisions. Since this study, Michalos (1986) completed an additional paper which lists twenty-five separate studies, undertaken since 1980, utilising satisfaction as a measure of QOL. Michalos, A. 1986. "Job Satisfaction, Marital Satisfaction and the Quality of Life: A review and a Preview", in Andrews (Ed.) *Research on the Quality of Life.* Ann Arbour, Michigan: University of Michigan, 57-84.

[89] McCall. 1973. op cit.

[90] Michalos, A. 1980. "Satisfaction and Happiness", *Social Indicators Research.* 8: 385-422.

Another fundamental issue in the subjective evaluation of QOL is the level on which personal well-being is assessed. The two major approaches which have been utilized include the the global and domain-specific realms. The global measures assume a broad focus by examining the general or overall feelings of the individual (ie. life as a whole). The initial explorations of the global measures of personal well-being were undertaken in 1957 by Gurin et al. The question they employed in their study read; "Taking all things together, how would you say things are these days - would you say you were very happy, pretty happy, or not too happy?"[91] In the years that have passed since this study the global measures have assumed a variety of forms with the most exhaustive study performed by Frank Andrews when he used sixty-eight separate global measures. The two global measures which were used in this study are taken from studies done by Flanagan and the Edmonton Area Survey.[92]

The domain-specific measures assume a diagnostic approach in analysing specific aspects of life (ie. family relationships, etc.). They were originally employed because researchers felt the "request to life as a whole may be an umfamiliar and difficult task for many respondents.[93] Converse et al. (1976), in their precedent setting study, used fourteen domain-specific measures as a means of predicting global QOL. Since their study the domain-specific measures have been refined such that most current studies rely on a group of six or seven domains. However, as is the case for much of the QOL literature, no conclusive evidence has been provided to suggest that the domain-specific are valid predictors of global QOL. Approximately half the studies which have been undertaken confirm an association among the domains and global measures, while an equal number fail to find any significant association.[94]

Gap-Theories Explanations

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[91] Gurin et al. 1960. op. cit. p. 124.

[92] See questions 55 and 56 in Appendix A.

[93] Andrews. 1976. op cit. p. 148.

[94] Schuessler et al. 1983. op cit.

Another cornerstone to the subjective measure of QOL is the utilization of aspirations and/or expectations in the evaluative procedure. It is here where the link between subjective and objective indicators is once again realized. Glatzer (1987) addresses this linkage by stating "in order to reduce dissatisfaction individuals have the alternative of either changing their objective conditions or adapting their subjective evaluations accordingly".[95] However before one can perform these adaptive procedures s/he must be confronted with the realization that there is a discrepancy between reality and aspiration. This discrepancy is a topic which has led to the development of the "achievement-aspiration gap". Campbell et al. (1976) when analysing the effects of various domains, have graphically illustrated this perceived gap. Figure 2.1 is a adaptation of the authors' work. Basically the authors explain personal satisfaction by focussing on the comparative aspect, or as Michalos would suggest through the "multi discrepancy theory".[96]

In a recent paper Michalos has reviewed the various gap theories and provided evidence to support at least six different species of the gap-theoretical hypothesis. These include;

1. Goal Achievement Gap Theory. This theory examines the perceived differences between what one aspires to or sets as goals and that which is currently the condition.
2. Ideal-Real Gap Theory. This theory differs from the above theory in that the ideal refers to particular state rather than assuming an individual focus. Basically it analyses the difference between "what one actually has and what is ideal".[97]
3. Expectation-Reality Gap Theory. The perceived gap in this case rests with personal expectations and that which is presently the case. Fundamental to this theory is the fact that desirability and preference play limited roles.
4. Previous Best Comparison Theories. Examines the perceived gap between the present

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[95] Glatzer, W. "Subjective Well-Being", *Social Indicators Research.* 19: p. 25.
[96] Michalos. 1986. op cit. p. 73.
[97] Michalos, A. 1986. "Job Satisfaction, Marital Satisfaction and the Quality of Life: A review and a Preview", in Andrews (Ed.) *Research on the Quality of Life.* Ann Arbour, Michigan: University of Michigan, p. 66.

Figure 2.1
An Adapted Version of the Expectation Model

conditions and pinnacle conditions of the past.

5. Social Comparison Theories. These theories are concerned with the relative differences between various individuals or groups, such that one's position is compared with a relevant person or group.
6. Congruence Theory. This category performs a residual function, existing to catch any theory which has evaded the previous five theories. Basically the theories involve an "assessment of the gap between some personal attribute and that of the subject's environment". [98] The difference of this approach is the fact that personal goals, ideals, expectations and personal best are not involved.[99]

Here again, the terminology one employs has direct implications on the eventual appearance or absence of a 'gap'. In an earlier study, Michalos (1980) suggested that when ones' expectations assumed the measurement focus, only half the studies could confirm the existence of a "gap". However when ones' aspirations were examined, virtually all the studies confirmed its existence.[100] In any case, the gap-theories continue to remain at the forefront of the QOL literature largely as a result of the success they have experienced. One might expect to see more of them in the future for as Michalos states, "we should be putting more resources into the gap-theoretical investigations".[101]

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[98] *Ibid* p. 67

[99] *Ibid* p. 66-67.

Empirical Studies

Individuals make use of multiple reference standards when evaluating their QOL. As a result many variables have been incorporated in the analysis of both personal well-being and QOL. Most of the variables employed in the QOL studies are those which are commonplace in sociological analyses; including age, gender, marital status, income and residency.

Income has been employed consistently in the analysis of QOL and has shown positive relationships with perceived well-being on most occasions.[102] Easterlin (1974) has been especially emphatic in his argument that "in all societies more money for the individual typically means more individual happiness".[103] However, once again relativity has surfaced as an intervening variable. Those in higher income brackets, regardless of their absolute measures, have consistently reported higher satisfaction levels. It appears that satisfaction with one's income transpires from "having more than someone else not just having more income".[104] Ackerman and Paolucci (1983) have confirmed the above finding with their discovery that satisfaction with income is more closely related with one's perception than objective measures.[105]

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[100] Michalos. 1980. op cit.

[101] Michalos. 1986. op cit. p. 72.

[102] See Easterlin (1974), Bradburn (1969), Cantrill (1965), Campbell et al. and Alston et al. (1974).

[103] Easterlin, R. "Does Money Buy Happiness?", *The Public Interest.* 30: p. 5.

[104] Duncan, O. D. 1974. "Does Money Buy Satisfaction?", *Social Indicators Research.* 2: p. 272.

[105] Ackerman, N. and B. Paolucci. 1983. "Objective and Subjective Income Adequacy: Their Relationship to Perceived Life Quality Measures", *Social Indicators Research.* 12: 25-48.

Age has received considerable attention in the QOL research with the construct used as the dependent variable having direct implications on the findings. While age has been positively correlated with satisfaction, it has concomitantly witnessed negative correlations with the happiness construct. The early studies examining this relationship[106] have been further substantiated by recent research.[107]

The health variable, while receiving considerable attention from QOL researchers, has also consistently shown positive relationships with personal well-bieng and thus QOL. A 1981 study undertaken by Fernandez concludes that "self-reported health is the best predictor of life satisfaction".[108] While other studies may not exude the same degree of confidence in the health variable, most have reported positive relationships between health and perceived QOL.[109]

Marital status and family size are two variables which have continually surfaced as predictors of QOL. The family size variable has lead to inconsistencies in the QOL literature suggesting that satisfaction may be "tempered by family circumstance".[110] Conversely, marital status has shown connaturality. When marital status is examined, studies have generally concluded that married individuals report higher levels of satisfaction than those never married. In addition separated and divorced individuals are continually less satisfied.[111] However the presence of very young or teenage children can have off-setting results on the reported happiness of married couples.[112]

Education while being a major predictor of one's social life, has received mixed reviews from the QOL research. Generally speaking, the relationship between education and life satisfaction has "been typically zero or slightly negative in most past studies".[113] Despite their own findings which suggest significance between the two variables, the authors find support for this statement in studies such as Clemente and Sauer (1967), Wilkening et al. (1981), and particularly Davis (1981) who reported that education had no effect on either personal happiness or personal satisfaction.[114] However, Norvel et al. (1981) in an extensive study of the education variable did find a positive relationship between education and well-being, though their results were dependent on gender and ethnicity.[115]

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[106] See Gurvin et al. (1960), Phillips (1967), and Campbell et al. (1976)

[107] See Fernandez et al. (1981) and Glatzer (1987).

[108] Fernandez, R. and J. Kulik. 1981. "A Multilevel Model of Life Satisfaction: Effects of Individual Characteristics and Neighborhood Composition", *American Sociological Review*. 46: p. 846.

[109] See Bradburn (1969), Palmore and Lickart (1972), and Flanagan (1979).

[110] Wilkening, E. A. and D. McGranahan. 1978. "Correlates of Subjective Well-Being in Northern Wisconsin", *Social Indicators Research*. 5: 211-234.

[111] See Clemente et al. (1967), Kennedy *et. al.* (1977), and Fernandez *et. al.* (1981).

[112] Glenn, N. and C. Weaver. 1979. "A Note on Family Situation and Global Happiness", *Social Forces*. 47: 960-967.

Satisfaction with one's community and neighborhood have also figured prominently in the QOL research. The majority of the research has concentrated on attitudes through an application of several independent variables.[116] While the area has been confounded by the difficulty in defining community, much of the previous research has concentrated to a large extent on leadership and decision making structures among other socio-political concerns.[117]

Another aspect of community satisfaction which has been intensively studied is resident location. When focussing on preferred location most authors have reported a preference for non-metropolitan living. [118] When personal satisfaction is used as the dependent variable, most studies report higher levels of satisfaction among rural residents for most aspects of life.[119] However, other researchers have found that the nearness to a major centre was an important factor in the satisfaction of small town residents,[120] and that personal satisfaction hinged more on satisfaction with one's neighbours than pure geographical location.[121]

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[113] Fernandez, R. and J. Kulik. 1981. A "Multilevel Model of Life Satisfaction: Effects of Individual Characteristics and Neighborhood Composition", *American Sociological Review*. 46: p. 841.

[114] Davis, J. A. 1981. Achievement Variables and Class Cultures: Family, Schooling, Job and Forty-Nine Dependent Variables in the Cumulative GSS", *American Review of Sociology*. 47: 569-586.

[115] Glenn, N. and C. Weaver. 1981. "Education's Effects on Psychological Well-Being", *Pulblic Opinion Quarterly*. 45: 22-39.

[116] See Johnson and Knopp (1970), Duran and Eckart (1975), and Davis (1981).

[117] Deseran, F. 1978. "Community Satisfaction as a Definition of the Situation", *Rural Sociology*. 43: 235-249.

[118] See Elgin et al. and Campbell et al. (1976).

[119] See Goudy (1977), Rogers (1979) and Marans and Dillman (1980).

[120] Fuguitt, G and Zuiches, J. 1975. "Residential Preferences and Population Distribution", *Demography*. 12: 491-507.

Community satisfaction has spawned another area of interest to the QOL researcher. Utopian communities are unique examples of the quest for QOL through community satisfaction and have received a tremendous amount of research and study. Though no consensus has been established to address the most appropriate type of utopian community, most these communities have a common goal in mind. That goal appears to be a withdrawl from main stream society because of a perceived lack of quality. Though there is one such community in Strathcona County[122] the difficulty involved in its inculsion in this study has led instead, to its exclusion. In any case, utopian communities provide interesting examples of both the quest for QOL and the difficulty in realizing it.

In summary, it is apparent that the empirical study of QOL has provided some rather conflicting findings. Past results appear to be tempered not only by the method of analysis but also by the construct employed. Change in either of these aspects does have some very far-reaching implications. Moreover, the existence or abscence of certain relationships is at best suspect, adding concern to the lack of specificity in the QOL research. To further complicate matters, most of QOL studies have been conducted on the social structure and thus are "virtually impervious to government intervention".[123] For these and other reasons, critics of QOL research have been very vocal.

Criticisms

Schuessler et al. (1983) have provided a list of fourteen criticisms of the QOL research as well as fourteen accompanying rebuttals. The criticisms revolve around three broad areas including definition, methodology and application. The definitional concerns focus on the lack of specificity and technicality for the QOL term itself. The use of the term QOL in a rhetorical sense has only added to the definitional problem. The methodological problems have risen as a result of poor correlations between the various measures and a virtual non-existence of acceptable conceptual models. The final concern they raise is the impact of the QOL research on policy. Here they reiterate concerns which contend that the QOL term is either used as support for political purposes or disregarded entirely.[124]

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[121] Rogers, W, 1979. *Resident Satisfaction in Relation to Size of Place.* Ann Arbour, Mich.: Institute for Social Research.

[122], There is a Hutterite Colony in the northern portion of the County.

[123] Schuessler et al. 1985. op cit.

When one examines most of the aforementioned criticisms, it is clear that they are certainly not exclusive to the QOL research. Through this chapter alone we have witnessed similar problems of specificity for both the rurality and the community concepts. Another positive aspect of the criticism afforded the QOL research is that most of it has come from individuals involved in the study of QOL. Undoubtedly a certain amount of conflict can be both healthy and progressive. For as Joseph Himes has suggested: "conflict not only projects the combatants into social consensus; it also acts to reaffirm the ultimate values around which the consensus is organized."[125]

D. Framework for the Strathcona Study

The empirical findings surrounding both the QOL concept and the rurality concept appear tenuous at best. For almost every study which has brought forth substantiated findings, there is an equally as convincing study refuting those findings. As such, researchers involved in these areas are left with a quandary as to how to address the issue in the most appropriate manner. The author has attempted to overcome some of these difficulties by taking into account the criticisms of such research. In taking this approach he hopes to alleviate some of the most common pitfalls in research of this nature.

One of the major measures to overcome the pitfalls of QOL research involves the use of both subjective and objective indicators. While the major focus of the study is the resident perceptions of life quality through subjective evaluation, it is apparent that the objective indicators will have an effect on those perceptions and thus also merit discussion. The objective analysis revolves primarily around the demographics of Strathcona County through the discussions of the following chapter.

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[124] *Ibid.*
[125] Himes, J. 1966. "The Function of Radical Conflict", *Social Forces*. 45: 1-10.

Since subjective analysis via the theoretical-gap concept has enjoyed favourable reviews from previous research, it is also incorporated into the current study. This gap hypothesis is tested primarily through the self-reported QOL responses.

The researcher has also focussed on the aspect of the rural-urban fringe. It would appear that Strathcona County provides an opportunity to study the validity of the rural-urban fringe as a sociological concept. If there are differences among the residents within the various sectors of the rural-urban fringe, then these differences should be unveiled through an examination of the QOL.

However, perhaps the most important ingredient of this study concerns the aspect of applicability. Since a major criticism of past QOL research is the fact that many of the results have had little affect on policy, this study has focussed on the aspect of County services in hopes to provide information which may aid in improved service delivery. In so doing, the study hopes to confirm the applied nature of the field of Rural Sociology.

III. STRATHCONA COUNTY

Strathcona County, legally known as the County of Strathcona No. 20, is located in the central portion of the province of Alberta. Lying directly east of the City of Edmonton it extends eastward to Elk Island National Park and the Cooking Lake Blackfoot Grazing Reserve. It is bordered to the north by the North Saskatchewan River, and to the south by Township Line No. 51. While a fraction of the County[126] extends down below Township No. 51 near Ministik Lakes, the vast majority of the County lies to the north of the township line.

The diversified landscape of Strathcona County has given rise to a wide array of settlement forms. In the northern portion of the County where the prairie landscape and good soils predominate, an avid farming community has prospered. The south central area with its aspen parkland and rolling wooded area has witnessed extensive development of the country residential sector, which is basically residential acreage holdings in predominantly rural areas. The west central area of the County houses Sherwood Park, the largest unincorporated hamlet in the province of Alberta. The nearness of Sherwood Park to the City of Edmonton has historically provided much of the growth to the hamlet and should continue to do so in the future.

Strathcona County is rather unique among the rural municipalities in Alberta. While housing fewer than ten percent of its residents on farms it is still classified as a rural municipality. In addition, with the growth of Sherwood Park and the strength of the country residential sector, the County can boast the largest population of any rural municipality of Alberta. To complicate matters this large population is confined within one of the smallest municipalities in Alberta resulting in the most densely populated municipality in the province. In order to support this large population, Strathcona County also relies on "the largest industrial concentration in the province".[127] Until recently these revenues were even greater but with the loss of twenty percent of its tax revenues through the annexation move during 1982, the County has been stripped from the title of the wealthiest county in Canada.[128]

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[126] The term "the County" will be used as a more speedy representation of the term Strathcona County, and thus should be taken to represent the same borders.

[127] Alberta Municipal Affairs. Affairs. 1983. *Municipal Services in the County of Strathcona No. 20* Edmonton: Municipal Affairs. p. 1.

This chapter will focus on the County of Strathcona as it exists today. Before providing a description of the County in terms of its present day status, the chapter will also take a brief look at the historical development of the County. The chapter concludes with a examination of the socio-demographics of the population under study. This discussion provides an essential ingredient for the study of QOL in Strathcona County.

A. History

Though Strathcona County was not a legal entity until 1962, the area which is now Strathcona County has a long and extremely interesting history. The longevity of the area can be witnessed by the fact that historians have traced the prehistory back twelve thousand years with archaeologists carbon-dating human existence back thirty-seven hundred years.[129] It appears that the nearness to the North Saskatchewan River has made the area a perfect staging area for wildlife and their resulting pursuants. In more modern terms, the history of the County reads very much like the rest of western Canada relying heavily on two major influences. Those influences are the fur trade, more specifically the Hudsons Bay Company, and the more recent influence of the railroads and other transportation channels.

The earliest written records of the area date back to 1670, and have the land which now referred to as Strathcona County encompassed within the vast holding of the Hudson Bay Company. Known originally as Rupert's Land, this area remained in the hands of the Hudsons Bay Company until three years after the signing of confederation when it was purchased by the Government of Canada.[130] As a result of this purchase the Northwest

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[128] On January 1, 1982 lands which were previously under the jurisdiction of the County of Strathcona were annexed by the City of Edmonton and the County of Leduc No. 25. There were approximately 3,500 persons affected by this decision. Of this total, 1600 persons resided in mobile homes, while the remaining 1900 were residents of farms or the country residential sectors.
Alberta Municipal Affairs. op cit.

[129] Ball, B. 1987. Alberta Culture. Interview Nov. 15, 1987.

[130] Redikop, L. and W. Gilchrist. 1981. *Strathcona County: A Brief History.* Edmonton: University of Alberta.

Territory was established. Soon after it became a government jurisdiction there was an intensified drive to break and settle the land rather than leaving in the untouched nature which predated its sale.

One of the first attempts at populating County lands was undertaken by the Edmonton and Saskatchewan Land Company. This endeavor revolved around a land swap that saw the Company receive the odd numbered sections in a few townships in the northern portion of what is now Strathcona County on the condition that they secured settlers to homestead the even numbered sections. [131] Despite this rather generous offer the first attempt ended in failure as the Edmonton and Saskatchewan Land Company was forced to liquidate its holdings. In retrospect, had the company been able to endure a couple of more years they may well have been successful as 1891 saw the completion of the railroad north from Calgary. Lured by the promise of accessible, affordable and fertile land pioneers began to migrate to the area. As a result of this migration we witness the initial influence of the City of Edmonton, or more specifically the town of Strathcona. The rest, as they say, is history.

The northern portion of the County was first to be settled, with the initial interest resulted largely from a gold find on a sandbar near a place which was to become known as Cloverbar.[132] As a result of this find and partly as a result of the poor harvests in the southern portions of the province, a certain magnetism was afforded the area ultimately succeeding in drawing settlers to it. By 1891 a settlement named Josephberg had been established complete with a school and a church. Within two years of building the school, the hamlet could boast a population of forty-five persons. [133] Recent statistics have the hamlet population at 149 residents[134], indicating a lessening of its relative popularity since the formative years.

Another major insurgence of residents to both the north and central areas of the County revolved around the concerted efforts of the Federal government to populate the area with new Canadians. Countries such as Austria and Russia were prime areas for recruitment as life in the Northwest Territories offered freedoms previously unavailable in their homeland. Also included in the recruitment drive were veterans of the Boer War who were given land near what is now Ardrossan, in recognition for their service to the Throne. The push to settle the area was also enhanced by luring pioneers from Ontario and the United States of America north to the land of plentiful harvests. One interesting marketing ploy involved the use of wheat grown from County soils and distributed in the southern States as an example of what could be accomplished in the Canadian north.[135]

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[131] *Ibid.*

[132] The village took its name from Tom Clover, the prospector who was at the centre of the gold find.

[133] Edmonton Bulletin.

[134] Strathcona County. 1984. General Municipal Plan Update

With new settlers came the pioneering spirit and the desire for organized communities. As such, villages by the name of Adrossan, Brookville, Partridge Hill, Good Hope and Pleasantview began to spring up and prosper. The eventual success or demise of these communities hinged largely on their geographical positioning and their major links of communication; namely, the railroad.

In terms of rail linkage, the County was well endowed as three major railroads serviced the area. These railroads, in addition to the influence of the railroad stopping at the town of Strathcona, had tremendous impact on the development of the County. The initial rail service was established in 1907 when the Canadian North Railroad was completed. The Grand Trunk Railroad was not far behind as this service was added in 1909. The final linkage came in 1928 when the Canadian Pacific opened its line north from Winnipeg. As Zimmerman and Moneo[136] have suggested, the railroads were instrumental in the future development of the communities within the County borders. "The populating of the prairie was based upon railroad transportation since its *raison d'etre* was for the first half of its existence that of supplying grain to Europe...[137] Some prospered, while others like Partridge Hill have ceased to exist as a functioning community.

The Grand Trunk Railroad played a particularly significant role in developing southern Strathcona County. Its importance revolved around the large bodies of water and their surrounding forests. As a result of these natural endowments, the southern portion was quick to prosper as a weekend and summer resort area.[138] Cooking Lake, the largest body of water in the area, saw particularly powerful affects of these developments as resorts were established on both its northern and southern shores. Train service to and from Edmonton was one of the major contributing factors by greatly enhancing the accessibility of such holiday retreats. While the area does not currently witness the same degree of popularity afforded the earlier eras, some of the remnants of the past glories are still evident today.

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[135] Redicop et al. 1980. op cit.

[136] Zimmerman, and Moneo. 1970. *The Prairie Community System.* Ottawa: Agricultural Council of Canada.

[137] *Ibid.* p. 18.

Of historical interest is the fact that Sherwood Park the the largest hamlet in the area, also has the most recent history. Its origin and continued growth is the result of several major influences, not the least of which was the need for affordable housing close to Edmonton and the newly constructed refinery row. The concept of suburbia asserted itself as a viable alternative to major urban concentrations. As a result of this viability, a section of land was put aside for the development of a community and the hamlet of Campbellton was born.

Campbellton drew its name from a local contractor John Campbell, who in 1951 was instrumental in constructing the hamlet's first houses. By 1955 the first ten lots had been registered. The community continued to prosper largely as a result of the high cost of housing in the city of Edmonton. As a result of this economic incentive the hamlet's population continued to increase until the early 1960's when it size eventually created the need for a post office. With the addition of Canada Post came another significant change to the hamlet. The name of Campbellton, by which the community had come to be known, was replaced by Sherwood Park. This change was undertaken as Campbellton had been previously registered by a maritime community and thus was rendered unavailable.[139]

The improved transportation channels to the city provided yet another boost to the population of Sherwood Park. Residents were interested in settling in the area as a means of escaping the problems of big city living while still maintaining access to the city's amenities. It appears that this geographical positioning continues to play a significant role in the prosperity of the community. Even today the overwhelming majority of the residents, while residing in

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[138] Redicop et al. 1980. op cit.

[139] *Ibid.*

Sherwood Park, are employed outside the County. Moreover, as many as 67% of its labour force work in the city of Edmonton, suggesting that the Edmonton connection remains a prominent one.

B. Strathcona County: The Socio-demographics

Strathcona County like many other counties on the rural-urban fringe has often been characterized as housing extremely homogeneous communities.[140] This homogeneity and ensuing standardization continues to be one of the major complaints levied against life in suburbia. William Drobriner (1963) addresses this concern when he states that visions of suburbanites and fringe dwellers conjure up the popular picture of "warrens of young executives on the way up; uniformly middle class; homogeneous; hotbeds of participation; child centered and female dominated".[141] How does this vision of suburbia compare with the real situation of Strathcona County? It is the intention of this section to delve into this very issue by outlining the demographics of the County of Strathcona No. 20. Included in this analysis are sections on population trends, age and gender structure, as well as employment and marital status.

Population Trends

While historic documentation provides a picture of rather stable growth for the initial years, such has not been the case since the inception of the County as a legal entity. Periods of rapid growth have been witnessed by its components as well as as the County as a whole. Essentially, these growth spurts have provided a doubling of the population over a fifteen year period. Tables III.1 and III.2 provide an indepth look at the changes in the population since the inception of the County.

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[140] Studies including the Recreation and Parks Development Plan (9185) and the Burton study (1979) have continually characterized the County as having homogenetic characteristics.

[141] Drobriner, W. 1963. *Class in Suburbia.* New York: Columbia University Press. p. 6.

TABLE III.1
POPULATION TRENDS IN STRATHCONA COUNTY FOR 1961 THROUGH 1987

	1961	1966	1971	1976	1981	1984	1987
Sherwood Park	2,963	6.339	14,282	26,534	28,798	29.647	30,846
Rural Portion	9,152	9,846	11,453	15,744	21,328	17,846	17,938
Total County	12,115	16,185	25,735	42,278	50,126	47,493	48,784

TABLE III.2
PERCENTAGE POPULATION CHANGE FOR STRATHCONA COUNTY FOR 1961 THROUGH 1987

	1961-66	1966-71	1971-76	1976-81	1981-84	1984-87
Sherwood Park	113.94	125.30	85.79	8.53	2.95	4.04
Rural Portion	7.58	16.32	37.47	35.47	-16.33	0.52
Total County	33.59	59.01	64.28	18.56	-5.25	2.72

Source: Derived from Statistics Canada and Municipal Census

Both Table III.1 and Table III.2 indicate that there was rather sporadic growth since the inception of the County, with the largest influx of residents coming during the decade ending in 1981. This is not peculiar to Strathcona County as it coincides with a major growth spurt in the province of Alberta. While the County witnessed a near doubling of population over this time period, the province of Alberta had a growth of 137% in the same time.[142] While it is true that the increase is more significant in Sherwood Park than the rural areas, the major influx of residents has been felt in all sectors of the County. The negative growth rates assigned to the three year period ending in 1984 can be attributed to the annexation of lands by both the City of Edmonton and the County of Leduc. Since Sherwood Park remained isolated from these border changes, only the rural sectors show the negative growth rates for this period. If one could speculate for future concerns, perhaps the greatest concern to the continued operation of the County is the relative strength of the growth rates of Sherwood Park when compared to the rest of the County. It appears that the zone of transition so characteristic of the rural urban-fringe and thus Strathcona County, will continue to send the "waves" of change reverberating for some time to come.

By dichotomizing the County into rural and urban sectors some of the uniqueness and diversification of rural Strathcona County is lost. By utilizing a more sophisticated classification scheme, we can better understand the nature of the changes which have taken place in the rural area. Table III.3 allows a more indepth look at the population changes in rural Strathcona County by focussing on the annual growth rate for the various components.

Table III.3 suggests that the early 1970's witnessed the most drastic changes in the rural make-up of the County. Of particular importance is the extensive rate of growth for the country residential developments which expanded (13.28%) during the five year period ending 1976. Once again this coincides with a general movement of the urban area to the rural locales. Beale (1977) in his review of nonmetropolitan growth in the United States suggests that the mid 1970's witnessed an outmigration of the urban population to the less sparsely populated rural areas. In his study he contends that among other reasons, people were

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[142] Statistics Canada. 1981.

TABLE III.3
ANNUAL GROWTH RATE FOR[1]
RURAL STRATHCONA COUNTY 1971 TO 1987

	1971-76	1976-81	1981-84	1984-87
Hamlets	2.45%	6.30%	5.40%	-0.70%
Farms	-5.97%	2.45%	-3.96%	7.90%
Country Residential	13.28%	7.25%	-5.50%	-3.60%

[1] The annual growth has been calculated by the following formula;

$[(Nx/Ny)^{1/t} - 1]$ where *Nx* equals the population at the start of the time period, *Ny* equals the population at the end of the time period and *t* equals the number of years.
Source: Derived from Statistics Canada and Municipal Census

prompted to "stay or move to areas that will continue to be comparatively small, remote and rural...".[143] Closer to home, the same five year period saw a major growth of both the County of Parkland and Municipal District of Sturgeon[144], indicating considerable applicability of the phenomenon to central Alberta. Since the country residential and the farm populations are basically competing for the same land base, the negative growth attributed to the County's farm population is explainable given the excessive rates of growth for the country residential sector. Once again this appears to be a direct consequence of its location in the rural urban fringe.

An influx of people to the rural areas continued (albeit to a lesser extent), until 1981. During this period both the country residential and the hamlet sectors experienced significant rates of growth. The hamlets of Antler Lake and Collingwood Cove were the main beneficiaries in this insurgence in hamlet population as they accounted for 96% of the newcomers to the hamlets.[145] That fact that these particular rural hamlets provide rural living environs similar to the country residential developments may add to the homogenetic make-up of rural Strathcona County.

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[143] Beale, C. L. 1977. " The Recent Shift in the U. S. Population to Nonmetropolitan Areas, 1970-75", *International Regional Science Review,.* 2(2): p. 115.

[144] Alberta Municipal Affairs. 1983. op cit.

[145] General Municipal Plan. op cit.

Table III.3 also indicates that since annexation in 1982 and particularly since 1984, the rural components have continued to witness an outmigration. This is particularly evident in the country residential sector which reports an average decline of approximately four and a half percent (4.5%) per annum since 1981. The other rural communities also show fluctuations in their yearly growth rates. While the negative growth rates are explainable for the years following annexation, the more recent discrepancies are certainly more difficult to comprehend. Of particular intrigue is the fluctuation in the farming population over the last six years. After reporting the expected decline following annexation, the farming population has exploded with an annual growth rate of almost eight percent since the last municipal census. This growth rate is contrary to both Canadian and provincial trends. It is also quite surprising given the fact that the same classification scheme was employed for both the 1984 and 1987 Municipal censuses. To further complicate the situation, this has population growth has been accomplished while the number of farms in the County has declined from 1053 in 1981 to 899 in 1986.[146] A possible explanation for such discrepancies may be attributed to the scenario that rural families are reporting a farm status for tax purposes while disregarding the Agricultural Census. In any case the relative growth of Sherwood Park when compared to the rest of the County may have some important implications for the future of the County.

Age and Gender Structure

As is suggested by Dobriner (1963) the County houses a relatively young population. When compared to the rest of Alberta, and the Edmonton region in particular, the County maintains a younger population. According to the General Municipal Plan Update the mean of County residents falls one full year below both the provincial and the Edmonton Metropolitan region figures. However the aggregate figures may be somewhat misleading. If the same classification scheme is employed as utlilized for the population statistics we can begin to see the differences among the various sectors of the County. Table III.4 provides the evidence for the rural components of the rural-urban continuum.

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[146] Statistics Canada. 1986.

The above table indicates that the age structure does vary considerably across the rural-urban continuum. The farm population appears to be at the crux of most of these differences. Of particular significance is the greater percentage of older residents in the farm population when compared with the rest of the County. Thirty-five point five percent (35.5%) of the farming population falls in the last two age categories . This compares with its nearest counterpart the hamlet population, where 23.95% of its total falls in the same categories; and even less favorably with Sherwood Park which has only 20.0% of its population falling in the last two age categories. This Sherwood Park figure is particularly interesting as Sherwood Park has housing designed specifically for the elderly. This variation in the age of the components may have a bearing on the reported levels of satisfaction as QOL has been positively correlated with the age of the respondent in several QOL studies. The fact that the hamlet population has a greater proportion of its residents in the zero to four age category also provides some possible concern for the reported satisfaction levels as couples with very young children are also less likely to report high levels of satisfaction.[147]

One statistic which is not surprising is the large proportion of residents falling in the middle age category. Differences are only noticeable in the farm population where a smaller proportion of people are encompassed in this category. The rest of the components contain very similar proportions. The similarities between the country residential and Sherwood Park are rather striking. Across the complete age spectrum the two components never vary more than 2.3% among the age groupings. It is also interesting to note that there are only two categories which produced a difference of greater than one percent.

Marital Status

The current Canadian trends for marital status are borne out by the Strathcona County example. The County has witnessed a steady decline in the proportion of married individuals from 1976 onward. Since that year the proportion of County residents fifteen

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[147] Glenn et al. 1981. op cit.

TABLE III.4
PERCENTAGE OF STRATHCONA COUNTY RESIDENTS BY AGE GROUPS AND LOCATION OF RESIDENCY
(with percentage female in parentheses)

Age Group	Country Residential	Farm	Hamlet	Sherwood Park
0-4	6.3 (47)	4.7 (55)	8.9 (42)	6.8 (46)
5-14	19.8 (47)	14.4 (47)	18.2 (45)	19.4 (49)
15-19	11.2 (49)	9.7 (51)	7.5 (43)	11.2 (50)
20-24	5.8 (44)	7.8 (47)	5.6 (54)	6.5 (47)
25-44	34.8 (51)	28.0 (50)	36.0 (46)	36.1 (53)
45-64	18.9 (45)	26.9 (47)	17.0 (49)	16.6 (46)
65+	3.1 (47)	8.6 (45)	6.9 (47)	3.4 (56)

Source: 1987 Municipal Census

years or older who were married or living common-law has decreased from seventy-five percent (75%) to approximately seventy percent (70%). This proportion is still greater than the Alberta figures which report approximately sixty-four percent (64%) of the province's population falling in the same category.[148] Similarly the percentage of divorced and separated persons has risen from approximately two percent (2.06%) in 1976 to three point five eight percent in 1987.[149] Once again these figures are slightly less than the Alberta averages which report approximately four percent of the provincial totals claiming divorced status.[150]

When we analyze the marital variable across the rural-urban continuum we see very similar distributions. Table III.5 provides a detailed examination of the distribution across the various components of Strathcona County. It indicates that the farm population is once again in the centre of most differences.

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[148] Statistics Canada. 1986.
[149] Municipal Census. 1987. op cit.
[150] *Ibid*

TABLE III.5
PERCENTAGE OF COUNTY RESIDENTS 15 YEARS AND OLDER
BY MARITAL STATUS AND RESIDENT LOCATION

Age Group	Country Residential	Farm	Hamlet	Sherwood Park
Married	75.6	71.9	74.0	72.2
Divorced	1.5	1.8	3.2	2.5
Widowed	1.6	3.1	3.0	2.1
Never Married	20.3	22.3	18.4	21.9

Source: 1987 Municipal Census

Education

Strathcona County contains a well educated resident force with approximately forty-eight percent (48%) of population progressing beyond a highschool diploma and a full twenty percent (20%) with university training. Furthermore, in the five year period ending in 1981, the proportion of residents holding a post secondary certificate has increased by approximately seven percent (7%). Increases have also been witnessed (though less dramatically), by the proportion of residents obtaining a university degree. Between the 1976 and 1981 the percentage of persons in the completed degree category rose marginally from 11.7 in 1976 to 12.12% in 1981. Table III.6 provides a comparison of Strathcona County with the Alberta averages for the years 1976 and 1981.

While a lack of data does not allow for intra-county comparisons, it should be noted that the figures for Strathcona County exceed the provincial statistics for both 1981 and 1986. The 1986 statistics are incorporated to allow comparison between the County statistics and the provincial averages as well as indicating some of the trends over the last five census period. While the comparisons may not be exact, they do allow one to make some assumptions about the Strathcona County situation given the provincial averages. If the Strathcona County trends are similar to the provincial trends we would likely see a further decrease in the proportions in the lower strata, a growth of the middle categories and a relative stabilization of the

TABLE III.6
PROPORTION OF POPULATION OVER 15 YEARS
BY EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

Education	Strathcona 1976	 1981	Alberta 1981	 1986
< Grade 9	9.5	6.1	15	11
Some highschool	37	33.3	37	30
Highschool diploma	11.7	12.9	13	11
Post secondary	21.2	27	14	27
Some university	7.9	8.6	10	10
University degree	11.7	12.1	11	11

Source: Statistics Canada and Strathcona Municipal Census

proportions in the higher categories. Since the 1986 figures are not available on the county level the provincial figures will have to suffice. For additional comparisons, suffice it to say that the distribution across the education variable are "similar to the range evident for St. Albert but below the the average of south west Edmonton".[151]

Employment Status

When examining the employment variable through the composite statistics of Strathcona County, several trends emerge. The first trend concerns those individuals reporting gainful employment. The number of persons working both full-time and part-time have increased while the number of homemakers has declined. In addition the persons reporting unemployment has increased in both absolute numbers and proportions since 1984.

When the various components of the County are examined, we see a virtual repeat of the age variable in that the Country Residential and Sherwood Park populations have remarkably similar distributions. Only one category shows a difference of more than two

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[151] Planning and Development. 1985. op cit. p. 10.

TABLE III.7
EMPLOYMENT STATUS OF STRATHCONA COUNTY RESIDENTS FOR THE YEARS 1984 AND 1987

Employment Status	1984	1984%	1987	1987%
Full-time	17,236	37.74	18,863	39.25
Part-time	3,356	7.35	4.[illegible]0	8.41
Homemaker	4,959	10.86	4,309	8.97
Seeking work	1,419	3.11	1,279	2.66
Unable to work	91	0.20	116	0.24
Retired	1,479	3.24	1,835	3.82
Student	3,842	8.41	1,071	2.23
Other	107	0.23	1,626	3.38
NA	13,183	28.86	14,925	31.05
Total	45,672	100.00	48,064	100.00

TABLE III.8
PROPORTION OF POPULATION OVER 15 YEARS BY EMPLOYMENT STATUS AND LOCATION OF RESIDENCE

Employment Status	Country Residential	Farm	Hamlet	Sherwood Park
Full-time	56.5	51.8	51.6	72.2
Part-time	10.3	10.2	9.1	12.0
Homemaker	13.6	16.4	14.4	12.0
Unemployed	3.5	4.5	6.9	3.5
Unable to Work	0.3	0.4	0.5	0.3
Retired	5.0	8.7	10.4	5.0
Post secondary	2.9	2.4	2.2	3.4
Other	3.4	2.4	0.4	1.8

Source: 1987 Strathcona Municipal Census percent for the entire distribution. However there is slight deviation from other variables in that the Hamlet population rather than the farming community, assumes the major divergence from the remaining sectors. Table III.7 allows for a closer examination of the differences among the residential sectors. Basically the hamlet population reports fewer individuals in the full-time and part-time categories as well as fewer individuals attending post secondary institutions. To accompany these differences, the hamlets also house a greater proportion of unemployed persons and those unable to work. These employment figures must be considered as having a bearing on the reported levels of satisfaction among those individuals.

C. Discussion

When one compares the social milieu of Strathcona County with neighboring counties and/or provincial counterparts, a common trend emerges. Perhaps the most crucial in terms of QOL, is the fact that the County houses a population which occupies a position on the upper end of the socio-economic scale. Strathcona County is comprised of a well educated labour force; a middle class, middle aged resident population; a population whose family incomes generally exceed provincial averages; a population approaching full employment. When similar communities are considered, the County appears to have assumed an advantageous position. Whether this position is by design or chance is beyond the realm of this study.

Geogaphical location has also provided Strathcona County with some advantageous. It lies only kilometers away from a major centre of western Canada, whose own QOL has been ranked highly relative to other metropolitan centres. Furthermore, as a result of its position on the eastern border of the city, the residents never have to face the sun in their daily commuting ritual.[152] More importantly, the nearness of Edmonton provides an opportunity for the residents of Strathcona County to experience the best of both the rural and urban lifestyles. When locational advantage is combined with the other social realities (such as above average income levels), it would appear to further enhance the quality of County living. Not only are the residents from this rural-urban fringe allowed to realize the employment opportunities afforded urbanites, they are equally as likely to make use of amenities available only in such urban centres. Add to these advantages, the advantage of a tax base which relies on some of the major industry in the area, and the potential for high QOL is accentuated.

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[152] This aspect was listed as an advantage to Strathcona County by several respondents.

Yet there are some extenuating circumstances for residents of the rural-urban fringe. Previous discussion has unveiled the fact that there are social organizational problems in communities on the fringe. Much of this disorganization lies with the fact that the vested interests of individuals from the various sectors are usually not synchronized. Furthermore, where the rural world meets the urban world there are bound to be some differences and accompanying transition. This aspect of transition so characteristic of the rural-urban fringe is certainly evident in the Strathcona County case. The "waves" of change which accompany this transition are continually making their presence felt. As the urban lifestyles purge further into rural Strathcona County, we are likely to witness increasingly more homogeneity. However, for the present it might be wise to consider the thoughts of Ebenezer Howard and his discussion of this dilemma during the late 1800's. "Town and country must be married, and out of this joyous union will spring a new hope, a new life, a new civilization."[153] It is apparent that Strathcona County is still seeking this joyous union.

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[153] Ebenezer Howard 1898. As quoted in Donaldson, S. 1969. *The Suburban Myth*. New York: Columbia University Press. p. 23.

IV. METHODS AND PROCEDURES

A. Introduction

Previous discussion indicates that one of the more interesting controversies surrounding the QOL literature concerns the question of methodology. The controversy has revolved primarily around identifying whether subjective indicators or their objective counterparts are superior for the measurement of QOL. The early QOL literature is saturated with attempts to solve this methodological dilemma through unidimensional approaches. Essentially the authors attempt to produce evidence to substantiate their particular point of view and thus catapult it into the forefront of the QOL research.[154] Though this controversy is still evidenced today, a far more widely accepted approach focusses on the need for compatibility, rather than confrontation, of the two traditional approaches.

Milbrath articulates this concern when he states "...the recommended strategy is to design a quality of life study that will systematically gather data on both objective and subjective perceptions".[155] Leslie Kennedy takes the argument one step further as he contends that the major problem plaguing today's QOL research is the failure to incorporate both subjective and objective indicators with the demographic and behavioral characteristics of the population under study.[156]

The methods and procedures followed in identifying the QOL in Strathcona County assume the focus of this chapter. The first few sections deal with the data needed to complete the study. Following these sections is a discussion regarding the quest for the primary data. Included among these concerns are discussions devoted to the sampling design and procedure as well as the methods employed in constructing, designing and administering the interview schedule. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the validity and reliability of the measures used throughout the analysis.

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[154] Some examples include Gurin et al., 1965; Bradburn, 1969; Flax, 1972; Campbell et al, 1976.

[155] Milbrath, J. 1979. "Policy Relevant Quality of Life Research" *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 444: 32.

[156] Kennedy, L. 1987. Interview. June 18.

B. Data Considerations

The tremendous amount of research devoted to the QOL concept has been instrumental in providing a solid theoretical foundation for this study. As such it was necessary to perform an information search of the available library material. The library research focussed primarily around the resources in the University of Alberta library system in conjunction with materials from Strathcona County's library. Basically the search was conducted on two levels. The initial search focussed on an indepth computer search of all the relevant sociological literature dealing with the broad areas of QOL and personal well-being. The result of this process was a list of eight hundred and fifty-three (853) separate journal articles and conference papers. After additional controls were placed on the nature of the articles, this list was reduced to a workable number of one hundred and fifty (150) titles. From this document the author proceeded to explore the applicability of the sources by manually selecting the pertinent information.

In addition to the computer search the author also proceeded with a more traditional library searches. These traditional searches also included the City of Edmonton Library in addition to the Strathcona and University library systems.

With the completion of this literature search, the author began the conceptulization process required to identify both the areas and variables which would assume the focus of study. The basis for this procedure is is summarized in the discussion in Section D of Chapter II which outlines the empirical studies completed to date in the area of QOL. The actual data sources which were incorporated in this process are discussed below.

Data Sources

While this theoretical information is quintessential to any research procedure, it is by no means definitive. In addition to a library search the author had to incorporate a number of other types of data. By utilizing several types of empirical data the author has attempted to overcome the limitations discussed by both Milbrath and Kennedy. The nature of these data (delineated largely by the objectives outlined in the introductory section of the thesis), rely on two major areas of focus. Included in this analysis are objective indicators and subjective perceptions.

Objective indicators: The socio-demographic characteristics while providing an outline of the community under study, allow one to see the framework under which attitudes are developed. A number of sources have been instrumental in delineating the community. Two of the major sources include the Census Canada data and the 1984 and 1987 Strathcona County Municipal Census.[157] Another document which has been crucial to this aspect of the study is a report addressing the socio-economic trends in Strathcona County.[158] In addition to the two aforementioned censuses, this indepth document has derived its information from several other studies. Among these are; "Alberta Apartment and Vacancy Cost Survey"; "Alberta Retail and Service Trade Statistics 1975 - 1983"; "Edmonton Metropolitan Regional Plan"; "Royal LePage Survey of Canadian House Prices"; as well as information from various departments within the municipal government. Information regarding the socio-demographic and objective indicators has also been obtained from a study by Alberta Municipal Affairs examining the quality of services in Strathcona County.[159]

Resident perceptions: The resident perceptions were addressed through the telephone interview which concentrated its efforts on a randomly selected sample of the Strathcona County's residents. As the specific considerations utilized in the development and administration of the survey comprise the focus of the following sections, they require only brief introduction at this point. Basically the author relied on four previous studies to develop the interview schedule. The major contributors were the Burton Study,[160] the Fort Saskatchewan General

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[157] The author is rather fortunate that the study was conducted during a census year and thus has recent data on which to base his findings.

[158] Planning and Development. 1985. *Socio-economic Trends in the County of Strathcona.* Strathcona County.

[159] Alberta Municipal Affairs. 1983. *Municipal Services in the County of Strathcona No. 20.* Edmonton: Government of Alberta.

[160] Burton. 1979. op cit.

Plan Survey,[161] the Edmonton Area Survey[162] and a USA QOL study by Flanagan.[163] The Strathcona County Fire Department Survey was also included in the analysis.

C. Field Data

The field data for this study was collected in the months of July and August, 1987 from a random sample of Strathcona County residents. During the process the researcher followed the nine step process outlined by Bailey in his discussions of social research.[164] The results of this procedure comprise the discussions of the following sections.

The Sampling Frame

The sampling frame consists of the complete list from which the sample can be drawn.[165] For the purposes of this study the sampling frame consists of those residents of Strathcona County, eighteen years of age and older, whose households were listed in any one of the telephone directories which serve Strathcona County. The telephone directories which were consulted include the 1986 addition for Ardrossan, Sherwood Park and Fort Saskatchewan, as well as the 1987 addition for the the Toefield area. Since the study concerned itself with Strathcona County, only those listings with a County address were included for both the Toefield and Fort Saskatchewan directories.

The Sampling Procedure

The sampling procedure followed a simple random sampling technique which utilized a list of random numbers to select the page number, the column number, and the unit of analysis. Since the study has employed a probability sampling technique, the results can be generalized to the larger population. After consulting the Epistat Computer Package designed by Tracy Gustafson (1984)[166], a sample of three hundred and eighty-one (381) residents was deemed necessary if the sample was to fall within five percent of the true mean, ninety-five percent of the time. That is to say, by utilizing this sample size the data which was gathered should be accurate within plus or minus 2.5%, nineteen times out of twenty.

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[161] The Fort Saskatchewan General Plan Survey. 1979. Edmonton: Population Research Laboratory.

[162] Edmonton Area Study. 1984. Edmonton: Population research Laboratory.

[163] Flanagan, 1979. op cit.

[164] Bailey K. 1982. *Methods of Social Research*. New York: The Free Press. p. 254.

[165] Churchill, G. 1983. *Marketing Research*.New York: Dryden Press.

Constraints placed on the sampling procedure included sampling without replacement. As such each household could be selected only once with a single member of the household being allowed to participate in the survey. In accordance with the desire to obtain an equal number of males and females, additional control was placed on the gender of the respondent. Though the females still outnumbered the males, the relative proportions were much more representative than many other household surveys.[167]

The Units of Analysis

The actual sample contained two hundred and twenty-eight (228) adult representatives from an identical number of County households. Though the original sample did contain three hundred and eighty-one (381) households, many of those households remained beyond contact. A possible reason for this high number of vacancies was the fact that the study was undertaken in the summer months. In consideration of the fact that the summer months are often difficult months for conducting survey research, several measures were undertaken to limit the number of absentees. Among these were measures to control the time of the telephone call. If a household could not be contacted on the first attempt, the interviewers would note the time of the call and make an additional attempt on a different time and date. By altering the time of the call it was hoped that more households could be reached. Before the household was considered unavailable, four call backs were performed. If there was still no answer at this time the household was deleted from the sample population. Another measure which was undertaken to limit the problem of non-response revolved around the interviewing period. By spreading the interview process over a six week period, adequate time should have been provided for a normal vacation.

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[166] Gustafson, T. L. 1984. *Epistat Statistical Package*. Round Rock: Texas.

[167] It is interesting to note that this quota sampling was not done on the Burton study or a study undertaken by the Provincial Recreation & Parks Department (1984). The result of this failure to set quotas was a major over representation of the female gender. The Burton Study received a sample which contained approximately 63% females while the Recreation and Park survey included 67% female respondents. This study attempted to obtain equal representation from both genders and while perfect distributions were not obtained, it was more acuate than both the aforementioned studies.

In lieu of the aforementioned difficulties, the study still maintained a return rate of approximately eighty-seven percent (87%). This response rate is well within the acceptable limits. Of course, one of the main reasons for the high rate of return lies with the calculation procedures for telephone surveys and the fact that those who were never contacted are to be excluded from such calculations.[168] Answering machines, a problematic area for return rates of telephone surveys, were considered as contact with the respondent and thus included in the rate of return. Table IV.1 provides a detailed account of the respondent rate for this study.

The Sample Characteristics

The author has undertaken a comprehensive description of the sample in order to provide the reader with a means of ascertaining the degree to which the greater population is represented. This is done primarily to provide a backdrop against which the study's results can be interpreted.

The sample which was utilized during this study is to a large extent an accurate representation of the larger population. One of the major deviations from the true population exists in the gender classification where a greater number of females responded despite the fact that there are fewer females living in both the rural and urban components of Strathcona County. This phenomenon of over representation of the female gender is common to household surveys.[169] While there are larger proportions in the female category, the discrepancies are small enough that they do not appear to have affected the data. The sample contained 55.3% female as compared to 49.7% in the actual population. Additional support for this assumption lies in the fact that no significant differences were found in gender

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[168] Dillman, D. 1978. *Mail and Telephone Surveys.* New York: John Wiley & Sons.

[169] Burton. 1979. op cit.

TABLE IV.1
RESPONSE TO THE STRATHCONA COUNTY QOL SURVEY

Category	Actual No.
Completed Interviews	228
Refusals	25
Answering Machines	15
No Answer	62
Out of County Addresses	12
Deceased	1
Discarded	9
Discontinued Number	11
Moved	15
Total	381

comparisons for most aspects of the analysis.

The other socio-demographic characteristics are remarkably similar to the larger population. The median age for example was identical for both the sample population and the population of which it represents. In both cases the median is forty years of age.[170] While there were slightly more respondents from the '25 to 44 year' age category, the distribution of the populations were also relatively close.

The distribution of the sample's cases across the rural-urban continuum is also quite consistent with its parent population. In both cases Sherwood Park assumed approximately two-thirds of the total numbers. The actual proportions include 65.3% of the sample reporting a residency in Sherwood Park, compared with 62.6% in the true population. The other components were also similar. The sample contained 21.8%, 6.2%, 5.8% of its respondents from the country residential, farm, and hamlet populations respectively. These figures compare favourably with the statistics from the 1987 Census which reports 25.5%, 9.5% and 2.3% for the same categories.[171]

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[170] This median age is different than the median age cited in Chapter III as only the residents eighteen years of age or older were included in this calculation.
[171] Once again it should be noted that these figures only include the County's population over seventeen years of age.

The nature of the distribution in the area of employment status was also very similar between the two populations. Sixty-one point three percent (61.3%) of the sample reported being employed on a full time basis. This compares with 57.8% in the true population. In addition, the proportion of homemakers was virtually identical with the sample population reporting point one percent (0.1%) fewer homemakers.

As far as educational attainment is concerned the sample contained a slightly larger proportion of respondents from higher educational strata. The actual figures include fifty-eight point eight percent (58.8%) of the sample obtaining at least a highschool diploma. This compares with a smaller percentage of the actual population where only forty-seven point eight percent (47.8%) has attained the same level education. However, the latter statistic is based on the 1981 Census and may or may not be an accurate representation of today's population.

The marital status of this study's respondents also varied from the 1987 Census data. The sample population contained 81.9% of the respondents in the married category while the true population only contains approximately 70% of the resident in the same category. This might be seen as an indication of the over representation of the individuals in the 25 to 44 age category. In any case the greater percentage of married individuals might play a part in the satisfaction levels of the sample as those who are married are more likely to report a satisfaction with life. On the other hand, the situation becomes further complicated by the fact that there is also a greater proportion of divorced and separated respondents. The sample contains almost twice as many individuals in this category than does the true population (5.4% versus 3.6 % from the Census data). These differences in the divorced category should offset the over population of married respondents.

In the final analysis it appears that the sample is indeed very representative of the greater population. While there are some minor differences in the various demographic characteristics, these differences do not constitute any grave concerns. Once again, the nature of the randomization appears to have paid off in terms of selecting an accurate and representative sample of a larger population.

D. Data Collection: The Telephone Survey

In order to study the attitudes of the residents of Strathcona County a survey had to be devised and conducted. The method which was originally chosen was a written questionnaire that could be dropped off and picked up by the researcher. However after additional consideration and collaboration with the County Steering Committee, a change in methodology was undertaken from a mail out format to a telephone interview. This change in research methods was undertaken for three major reasons. The first being that the researcher was restricted in the time allotted for the data collection aspect of the study. Since telephone surveys are renown for rapid data collection[172], this method was chosen over the more timely written survey.

The second reason the telephone interview was selected was the fact it would reduce the costs associated with the research. These lower costs would be witnessed for both the number of callbacks[173] and the costs associated with traveling to the respondents home.[174] Since several attempts to contact the households seemed inevitable, the telephone offered the greatest versatility for the least cost per contact. This is a rather important consideration since the research was undertaken in the summer months which are often reserved for vactions and thus vacant households. To counter this concern, the telephone provided the most convenient and cost effective method of reducing absenteeism. Moreover, since respondents were selected from the entire County the telephone offered an inexpensive means of reaching all respondents.

The third reasons the telephone interview was more applicable than the other forms of data collection was the fact that it allowed for greater control over the actual respondent.[175] Essentially, the telephone interview allows a certain degree of control in selecting the individual who will actually complete the schedule. This quota sampling, decreases the probability of obtaining a biased sample.

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[172] Dillman. 1979. op cit.

[173] Freeman H. E. et al, 1982. "Telephone Sampling Bias in the California Disability Survey" Unpublished manuscript. Los Angeles California.

[174] Klecka et al. 1978. "Random Digit Dialing : A Comparison to Personal Surveys" *Public Opinion Quarterly* 42: 105-114

[175] Bailey. 1983. op cit.

Disadvantages of Telephone Surveys

Of course there are also some disadvantages to using a telephone interview. The timing of the phone call ranks among the top of Bailey's list of major limitations to such research. If the respondent is called at a time when he/she is involved in other activities motivational problems can result in either refusals or poor quality answers. Though this research attempted to overcome these limitations by mailing an advance letter informing the respondents of the authenticity of the upcoming interview, the motivation problem was evidenced on a few occasions. In this case, the poorly answered interview schedules were deleted from the data base.

Another disadvantage attributed to the telephone interview is one that was listed earlier as an advantage, namely the amount of control afforded the interviewer. Though the interviewer can request that a certain member of the household answer the schedule, she/he cannot keep the respondent from asking other people for information, nor can she/he standardize the surroundings in which the interview is to be completed.[176] While there were a few occasions where the lack of control affected the interview through the respondents, these occasions were the exception rather than the rule. Once again the pre-study planning paid off for those occasions as there were statements designed to deal with this very issue.

E. Construction and Design of Interview Schedule

The interview schedule was developed after consulting a number of other QOL studies. The final draft is basically a compliation of questions from a number of sources. Included in the sources are questions from the Burton Study, the Fort Saskatchewan Municipal Plan Survey, the Edmonton Area Survey and a USA QOL study by Flanagan. By utilizing questions which have been employed in other QOL studies, the researcher could expect a certain degree of validity. As well, using questions from other studies also afforded the researcher the luxury of having populations to compare his sample against. Since several of the studies were undertaken in close proximity to Strathcona County, these comparisons should aid in identifying the QOL characteristics which are unique to Strathcona County.

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[176] Bailey. 1982. op cit.

Several of the questions were borrowed from a study which was undertaken for the City of Fort Saskatchewan. Since the Strathcona County and the City of Fort Saskatchewan share a common border, it was felt that a comparison of the two neighbouring communities could certainly provide information on the uniqueness of Strathcona County. In addition, questions from the Edmonton Area Survey were also included for their comparative purposes. A third source for questions was a QOL study pertaining to the psychological dimension. As an adaptation of this study was conducted in the province of Alberta, comparisons were once again available and localized.

The Burton Study (1979) was an important document in that it allowed the researcher to measure changes over time in Strathcona County. In addition to these comparative aspects, the study also incorporated questions designed as a result of answers given through open-ended questions in the Burton Study. It was felt that the combination of all these questions in conjunction with results obtained from a Fire Department survey completed earlier in the year, the researcher would have an adequate data base from which to work.

The actual questionnaire concentrated on four major areas. Included in these areas are:

1. Demographic informatiion
    a. Age and gender of respondent
    b. Education
    c. Place of residence
    d. Number and nature of dependants
    e. Occupation
    f. Location of employment
    g. Household income
2. Satisfaction with County Services

- a. County library
- b. School system
- c. Parks
- d. Family and Community Services
- e. Recreation services
- f. Health services
- g. Police services

3. QOL in Strathcona County
    - a. Reasons for choosing County
    - b. Fear of crime
    - c. Community atmosphere
    - d. Pollution
    - e. Proximity to Edmonton
4. Personal Well-Being
    - a. Family relationships
    - b. Personal health
    - c. Challenge of employment
    - d. Friendships
    - e. Material comforts
    - f. Participation in creative endeavors
    - g. Global satisfaction

Design Considerations

The Total Design Method developed by Don Dillman was relied upon extensively during the process of designing this schedule. Though this study has incorporated several adaptations to his methods, the basic theses behind his work was applied in the development of this survey. Dillman contends that there are basically three audiences who must be addressed when developing a viable telephone survey. These audiences include the interviewer, the respondent, and the data entry operator.[177]

First and foremost, this survey attempted to address the needs of the respondent. This was accomplished by placing a great deal of emphasis on the timing of the telephone call. Since the telephone interview is basically an intrusion on the respondent's private life (and one which can often come at unexpected times), the element of surprise can be problematic. To limit the degree of surprise the researcher sent out an advance letter notifying the selected households of the upcoming interview.[178] Moreover, since the initial few seconds of the interview often determines its success or failure[179], this survey included an introduction addressing the legitimacy of the interview. Given its relative importance, one of the major objectives of the introduction was to determine whether the respondent had the time to complete the survey. By attempting to proceed according to the respondent's schedule rather than that of the interviewer, refusals were kept to a minimum. Since many of the respondents were unable to commit themselves to the interview on the first contact, it was not uncommon to return the call at a more convenient time.

In addition to the task of developing an environment which was conducive to quality responses, the respondent was also considered in the construction of the interview schedule. Care was taken to ensure that the questions not only read well but were also easily grasped by a listener. Moreover the questions were organized into a flowing format. When the schedule addressed somewhat unrelated topics, the respondent was given a clear indication of interviewer expectations. The combination of introducing the new sections, using unambiguous wording and employing proper enunciation, worked well in keeping the respondent confusion to a minimum.

An equally important contribution to the success of the study is made by the the person conducting the interview. This survey tried to meet the the needs of the interviewer by creating a schedule which would be easy to administer. Since the respondent would never actually see the schedule, it was designed in such a manner as to provide utmost comfort for the interviewer. Included in this design were attempts to produce a schedule which flowed logically and was easily read. In the event of sequential questioning, auxiliary questions were clearly identified through the use of arrows and accompanying instruction.[110] To complement these considerations the researcher also produced a list of answers to questions which frequently surface in research of this nature. This list was provided to each interviewer prior to undertaking any interviews.

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[177] Dillman. 1978. op cit. p. 12
[178] See appendix B for a copy of the advance letter.
The letter did have a very positive affect on the receptiveness of many respondents. Comments such as "oh yes, we've been expecting your call" were quite frequently received from the respondents.
[179] *Ibid.* p 202.

In addition to the two main players, the data entry operator was also taken into consideration. To increase the efficiency of the of the data entry phase, the questions were organized in such a way as to make easy transfer to the computer. By eliminating the need to code most of the questions, several hours have been saved. Since the study is largely a one-man operation, time saved was of utmost importance. Though the needs of the coder are less important than those of the two previous groups, they were taken into account for this study.

The Interview Dynamics

In formatting the interview schedule the researcher followed many of the basic rules of social research. As Bailey (1982) has suggested the first few questions of the study were of the easy-to-answer variety.[111] This allowed the opportunity for the respondent to ease into the questionnaire before any of the more important attitude questions were raised. Furthermore, the sensitive question regarding income (as well as the an important open-ended question regarding the QOL), was left until the very end of the schedule. The fact that the income question was broken down into rather unrevealing categories also appeared to aid obtaining a response from the vast majority of the respondents.

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[110] For examples of this mapping technique see pages 130-137 of the interview schedule in Appendix A.

[111] Bailey, K. 1982. op cit.

Two other considerations were taken into account when designing the questionnaire. In order to avoid the development of a **response set**[112], response categories were organized differently for various questions. Not only were the response categories altered to deter stereotyped answering patterns, but a few questions were asked in a negative fashion in attempting to add variety. Question 28 is an example of a question written in the negative vain with hopes of pressuring the respondents to consider the true nature of the question.[113]

In attempting to stay within the acceptable limit, the length of the interview schedule was also considered. Kennedy suggested no more than thirty minutes from start to finish.[114] While the majority of the interviews were held to under fifteen minutes[115], there were a few occasions where the interview progressed beyond the suggested time phase. Since it was at the request of the respondent that the interview be prolonged, these occasions were not considered problematic.

Pretesting the Interview Schedule

The pretesting of the schedule was undertaken on three different levels. The initial pretest was employed primarily as a means of testing for face validity. Bailey (1983) describes face validity as a method of determining "whether the measure appears to be valid".[116] This was accomplished by having experts in the field of sociological research review the schedule and make suggestions for improvement. Revisions such as the restructuring of questions and the altering of a few response categories were undertaken as a result of this phase.

The second phase of the pretesting procedure involved assessing the schedule through the telephone medium. The respondents that were selected were acquaintances of the author who reside in the County and thus were familiar with the issues under study. The main purpose of this phase of the pretest was two fold. Initial concern revolved around ascertaining whether the schedule was comprehensible by a respondent over the telephone, and whether it could be completed by a respondent in a reasonable length of time. Once again certain adaptations were incorporated in order to improve the interview schedule. One of the major adaptations revolved around the wording of a question regarding the participation in the creative arts. By rephrasing the question to read 'creative endeavors' rather than 'creative arts', a great deal of confusion was eliminated. Since the schedule also asked questions in a negative fashion, the researcher was interested in noting any confusion in this area. No difficulties were found with the particular question as all the respondents indicated that they grasped the desired meaning during the discussion phase of the pretest.

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[112] Bailey (1982:140) describes the response set as "a tendency to reply to items in a particular way regardless of the question's content or the correct answer."

[113] While the question was asked in a negative fashion, the respondents appear to have understood the intended meaning.

[114] Kennedy. 1987. op cit.

[115] The average time per interview was thirteen point six (13.6) minutes

[116] Bailey. 1983. op cit. p. 490.

The results of the pretest were encouraging in that only minor changes were required to the original draft. This is understandable given the fact that most of the questions are borrowed from previous studies and are likely the result of previous screening and pretests. With the completion of the necessary revisions, the interview schedule was further tested on a random sample of County residents. Since no major areas of confusion arose, the researcher proceeded with the data collection aspect of the study.

F. Administering the Interview Schedule

The telephone interview is essentially a special case of social interaction and thus subject to the same rules and restrictions which govern other forms of social interaction.[117] In compliance with this consideration this study has incorporated the basic elements of the social exchange theory which contend that all attempts at social interaction are governed by the realization that people will strive to keep their perceived costs below their perceived benefits. Dillman in his extensive review of social surveys has suggested several ways to enhance both the quality of the data and the rate of return. These concerns revolve primarily around establishing trust, reducing the costs to the respondent, and rewarding the respondent.[118]

This study attempted to establish trust both prior to and during the interview. By notifying the respondents of the upcoming interview through a formal letter (signed by both the Reeve and the study's advisor), the legitimacy concern was addressed. The fact that the introductory letter was sent out on the Reeve's letterhead appears to have provided additional legitimacy to the survey. In addition to the advance letter, the interviewer's introductory statement specially to mention the fact that Strathcona County (the Reeve's Office in particular) was conducting the survey. It is interesting to note that on several occasions where the respondent could not recall having received the advance notification, a certain degree of respect was afforded the interviewer as a result of the mention of the Reeve's Office.

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[117] Bailey. 1983. op cit.

[118] Dillman. 1978. op cit.

The respondent's costs were dealt with primarily by focussing on the time required to complete the schedule. The researcher's main attempts at cost reduction revolved around making the respondent aware that the interview should not consume more than ten minutes and that the schedule could also be completed at more appropriate date or time.

The final consideration of rewarding the respondent was slightly more difficult to address. Since the rewards the researcher can offer are indeed limited, this study attempted to address these concerns by establishing a positive regard for the respondent. This was accomplished by reminding the respondent that the information they were providing could affect changes to the services they received. As such, the possible respondent benefits assumed the focus of the interview. Once again, this was accomplished through both the advance letter and verbal encouragement during the actual interview. The fact that many respondents saw this as an opportunity to vent their frustrations against certain aspects of County life, or as a means to lobby for desired changes was clearly evident on several occasions. Suggestions ranging from the concern over the lack of pest control to the need for more picnic areas were willingly provided by the majority of the respondents.

G. Processing the Interview Data

Since the majority of the schedule's questions (90.0%) were of the close-ended variety much of the need for coding was eliminated. In these cases, computer transfer of the data was also enhanced by the right alignment of the response categories in the schedule's format. As such the data entry procedure was made considerably easier.

For the remaining situations where coding was required, a sample of the interview schedules were reviewed in order to establish the necessary response categories. Through this procedure the researcher devised a classification system which would allow for numeric transformation of all the data and eventually its computerization. There was one exception to this procedure. The open-ended question regarding occupation was coded according to the categories which Marans and Dillman employed in their study.[119] Since the results from this study were to be compared with their results, a common base was essential for comparative purposes.

After devising a complete and comprehensive 'code book' addressing the nature of the variables and their data, the individual schedules were then transferred to the computer file. Upon the completion of the data entry phase the information was analysed with the aid of the Strathcona County computer system and the SPSSX statistical package.

Statistical Treatment of the Data

The level of the data which has been acquired inevitably places certain restrictions on the statistical procedures which can be performed. Certain statistical restrictions were expected in this study as the collected data was confined to the ordinal or nominal levels. Given these restrictions the analysis has proceeded according to available options; univariate analysis, bivariate analysis and correlation coefficients.[120]

The initial phase of the analysis was undertaken by examining the frequencies distributions of the variables. From this point the analysis invariably proceeded to an examination of the association of given variables and thus the utilization of bivariate analysis. It was during this phase of the analysis where the use of control variables became important. By incorporating constants into the analysis, the possibility of spurious relationships could be examined and detected. Upon the completion of this phase of the analysis, the researcher proceeded to employ correlation coefficients to examine the degree of association amongst the variables. This was particularly important for the global and domain specific measures of QOL. The results of these tests are discussed in Chapters V and VI.

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[119] Marans, R. W. and D. A. Dillman. 1980. *Perceptions of Life Quality in Rural America*. Ann Arbor, Michigan: The University of Michigan.
[120] The option of "boosting" the data to a higher level as undertaken by other researchers, may have increased the author's options, he chose not to employ these measures.

H. Validity and Reliability Considerations

In addressing the validity and reliability of the data the author has relied on the definitions provided by Bailey (1984) who suggests that validity concerns both "actually measuring the concept in question" and "... measuring the concept accurately".[191] He also contends that reliability addresses the consistency of measure. In attempting to assess both the reliability and validity the researcher has relied on a number of tests. The following discussion includes sections on how the study was recieved as well as attempts at internal reliability, and both face and construct validity.

How the Study was Received

The interviews were very well received by the residents of Strathcona County. This is not surprising given the nature of the study and the past experience of survey research in Strathcona County. Burton (1979) suggests that the response he received from the residents was one of the highest rates of return ever obtained by a survey researcher in Alberta. [192] While this response rate for this study was less than that received by Burton's 1979 study, it has also been very well received by the residents of Strathcona County.

In an attempt at quality control the researcher has employed systematic measurement for each schedule. Upon the completion of the interview, the interviewer was asked to rate the interview in terms of both its quality and the respondent's cooperation. While these ratings were purely subjective measures (and thus susceptible to the personal biases of the interviewer), the results are certainly encouraging. Of the two hundred and twenty-eight interviews, only one fell into the questionable category. The majority of the interviews

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[191] Bailey. 1984. op cit. p.68.
[192] Burton. 1979. op cit.

TABLE IV.2
ADVANCE LETTER STATUS AND INTERVIEW QUALITY

Category	Received Letter	No Letter
Interview Quality		
high quality	70.3	59.3
adequate	28.9	40.7
questionable	0.6	0.0
Respondent Cooperation		
cooperative	91.4	85.2
indifferent	8.6	14.8
uncooperative	0.0	0.0

(64.9%) received a high quality rating. Moreover, ninety point five percent (90.5%) of the respondents were considered as being cooperative during the interview process.

One rather interesting finding is the fact that those respondents who confirmed having received the advance letter were only marginally more receptive than those who could not recall having read the letter. A possible reasons for this finding is that the study's introductory statement addressed its legitimacy by mentioning the Reeve's Office and thus lessened some of the fears of hesitant respondents. Another possibility is that the respondents could envision the benefits of such a study and thus were willing to provide the necessary information. Empirical evidence to support the latter assumption can be seen through the statements (willingly provided by the residents), when asked for any additional concerns.

Reliability Measures

The major test employed as a means of assessing the reliability of the results concerned an attempt at internal reliability. This was accomplished with the aid of congruency analysis which compared the responses to similar questions. Questions 11 and 33 were included for this very purpose. By analyzing the responses to similar questions, the researcher has undertaken a repeated application test and discovered a highly significant correlation between the two measures.

Another test utilized as a measure for reliability involved the second alternative of assessing reliablility, employing "parallel forms of the same measure administered simultaneously".[193] Since two global measures were employed in the analysis, the author was able to measure the responses to both measures. Once again the resulting correlations were highly significant indicating a reliable data.

Validity Measures

The major measures included in the check for valid data involved an assessment of both face and construct validity. The face validity (which involves assessment by competent evaluators[194]) was measured in the first phase of the pretest by having experts in the area of QOL research assess the interview schedule. After addressing three separate sources the researcher was confident that the interview schedule was an adequate measurement tool. The more difficult measure of construct validity was achieved primarily through the procedure of utilizing only previously tested constructs in the interview schedule.

Of the aforementioned concerns, perhaps the willingness of the respondent to aid in the study has been most encouraging. Essentially, this willingness to respond has direct bearing on the validity of the gathered data as interested repondents are more likely to provide quality answers.[195] When one considers the quality of the responses in conjunction with the rate of return, this study appears to have established a solid base from which the subjective analysis can proceed. Additional support for the validity of the subjective analysis comes from the fact that the researcher has employed questions from a number of other QOL studies. By utilizing previously tested constructs the researcher is confident that he is indeed measuring the desired concept. In short, it is felt that the often evasive concept of construct validity has been addressed. Moreover, when this validity is combined with the availability of the recent statistics for objective indicators, this inquiry into the QOL of Strathcona County residents appears to rest on a solid foundation.

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[193] *Ibid.* p. 74.

[194] *Ibid.*

[195] Dillman. op cit. p. 202.

V. SATISFACTION WITH STRATHCONA COUNTY

Several years ago a notable sociologist suggested that "if men define situations as real, they are real in their consequences".[196] Nowhere is this more apparent than in the study of QOL. Moreover, it is especially applicable in the delivery of services where one's perception of the service usually becomes the primary determinant for assessing that service. Furthermore the way one perceives the situation is dependent upon relative comparisons. This aspect of relativity was clearly evident in the Strathcona County case. "Considering the other places we've lived, Strathcona County stacks up very well."[197] Given Michalos' research one might expect the relative concept to be prevalent in most measures of satisfaction.[198]

The provision of services and the perceptions of the County residents regarding those services are analyzed in this chapter. The aspect of relativity is ensured through both intra and inter County comparisons. In addition, global satisfaction with the County is analysed with the aid of the neighborhood satisfaction and willingness to move variables.

A. Service Domains

While recent reports have studied services in Strathcona County through objective measures, little has been undertaken on subjective measures since the 1979 Burton Study.[199] This study attempts to study resident perceptions of service delivery by addressing the following services: (1) ambulance, (2) Family and Community Services, (3) fire, (4) health, (5) library, (6) parks, (7) police and (8) recreation.[200]

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[196] Thomas, W. I. as quoted in Merton, 1968. *Social Structure and Social Structure.* Glencoe Ill.: Free Press.

[197] Quote from a QOL respondent.

[198] Michalos. 1983. op cit.

[199] Municipal Affairs. 1983 op cit. p. 23.

[200] The fire and ambulance results were obtained from a Fire Department Survey which was conducted in April 1987 and included a random survey of 633 households within the County. The rating scheme which was employed was identical for both studies.

Service Ratings

Of the services addressed through this QOL Survey, recreation received the top ranking. This ranking results from obtaining the greatest proportion of users in the "excellent" category. The recreation services had forty-four point seven percent (44.7%) of the users rating the current service as "excellent" in comparison to its nearest competitor, the library services, which received thirty-nine point nine percent (39.9%) in the same category. This proportion was much higher than the health services which received sixteen point seven percent (16.7%) of the sample in the "excellent" category. When the results from the Fire Department Survey are included in the analysis the recreation services drop to a third place ranking behind both the fire and ambulance services. Table V.1 provides the service ratings from the two surveys.

When examining Table V.1 some interesting relationships emerge. The first concerns the proportion of respondents in the "needs improvement" category. Even though the recreation and library services rate highly in terms of excellent ratings, they also received a relatively large proportion suggesting improvements. A possible reason behind this finding is the fact that these services are also among the most well used services in the County system.[201] Since both services are very visible, it is understandable that clients could provide a greater number of suggested improvements. Another less surprising statistic concerns the negative relationship between the extremes for the remaining variables. This is especially evident in the last three categories which provide a perfect negative relationship between the two extreme categories of "excellent" and "needs improvement".

When the services ratings are compared with the Burton Study, a general trend emerges. The favourably rated services received much higher ratings, while the services less favourably rated services witnessed only marginal declines. While a certain degree of this improvement may be attributed to the slightly different ranking scheme[202], it is unlikely that

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[201] Additional questioning assessing the frequency of use of the various services reported the recreation and library services as ranking first and second respectively.

[202] Burton employed the categories of "Good, Average, and Bad"; while the QOL and Fire Department studies employed "Excellent, Good, Adequate, Needs Improvement" as the measures.

TABLE V.1
RATING OF STRATHCONA COUNTY SERVICES
(percentage of respondents)

Service	Excellent	Needs Improvement
Ambulance	61.9	0.9
Fire	50.3	0.4
Recreation	44.7	2.7
Library	39.9	1.8
Schools[1]	31.1	0.9
Family & Community	30.7	0.9
Police	23.8	4.9
Parks	21.4	9.3
Health	16.7	11.6

[1] These figures are derived from only those household who have children in the school system.

the changes would affect only half of the variables. Table V.2 suggests that while the increases are not substantial for every service, some services have made major gains in terms of positive resident perceptions. The largest increases were witnessed in the Social Services category where the proportion of repondents increased nearly three-fold from 26.3% to 67.7%. In so doing the service also rose from last to the fourth place ranking. While the reasons for such inroads are difficult to explain (and would require further study), one possibile reason may rest with the fact that the Family and Community Services has made a conscious effort to increase their profile in the community since the Burton Study. In any case, changes have resulted in a drastic decrease in the percentage of persons providing a nonresponse to the question and thus an accompanying increase in the proportion of "good" ratings. The fact that the QOL Study was also undertaken over the phone may also have attributed these increases merely as result of the interviewers providing clarification as to the functions of the particular service.

TABLE V.2
RATING OF STRATHCONA COUNTY SERVICES 1979 VERSUS 1987
(percentage of respondents good or better)

Service	1979	1987
Police Protection	73.6	76.1
Fire Protection	72.3	63.6
Public Library	66.9	76.1
Public Health	66.4	65.9
Education & Schools	63.8	62.9
Parks & Recreation	62.9	77.4[1]
Social Services	26.3	67.7[2]

[1] The Recreation & Parks percentage represents the mean of the Parks rating (67.2%) and the Recreation rating (87.6%).
[2] The service rated was Family and Community during the 1987 QOL Study.

A lack of association between the perception of service and the resident location results when analyzing the services via the rural-urban continuum. Table V.3 suggests that the Country Residential sector is the least satisfied with the individual services. The Country Residential sector placed the smallest proportion of respondents in four of the seven services examined. However, of these four low rated services, only the park service received a substantially lower proportion of respondents. Conversely, the library service was the only service which contained the greatest proportion of Country Residential respondents. With the exception of health and park services, the Farm and Sherwood Park populations report high levels of satisfaction relative to the remaining sectors.

Table V.3 also suggests that of the services rated by the QOL Study, the Hamlet population was substantially lower on only one occasion (the school service), where sixty percent of the respondents rated the service as good or excellent. The remaining services ratings suggest a Hamlet population with similar levels of satisfaction for the various services. Moreover, for three services (recreation, parks and health), the Hamlet respondents housed the greatest proportion of residents providing a good or excellent rating. This is rather

TABLE V.3
SERVICES RECEIVING A GOOD OR BETTER RATING BY RESPONDENT LOCATION
(percentage of respondents)

Service	Country Residential	Farm	Hamlet	Sherwood Park
Recreation	83.4	100.0	100.0	93.9
Library	92.1	88.9	80.0	87.0
Family & Community	88.9	84.7	87.5	88.4
Police	73.8	83.4	81.8	88.9
Schools	74.3	92.4	60.0	84.6
Parks	68.5	80.0	88.9	77.5
Health	70.0	83.3	89.5	71.8

surprizing given the low levels of satisfaction reported by the Hamlet sector when overall satisfaction with the County is examined.

B. Overall Satisfaction with Strathcona County

While the individual services may be easier to address, the general feeling of satisfaction towards County life is equally as important. The following quotes provide an example satisfaction levels of respondents from this study.

"We have a real good County - can't complain about the services."

"We're quite happy and enjoy living here. We'd never move back to the city."

"I wish there were more places like it."

These direct quotes, indicative of the general feelings, leave little doubt as to the satisfaction levels of these County residents. The general applicability of these high levels of satisfaction are verified through the quantitative analysis. When the results from the County sample are compared with a 1980 U.S. study, Strathcona County residents continually report higher levels of satisfaction than their American counterparts.[203]

Table V.4 allows a closer analysis of these comparisons. With one exception, Strathcona County fares better than all the categories from the U.S. study by reporting a larger proportion of satisfied respondents and an accompanying smaller proportion of dissatisfied respondents.[204] Strathcona County's advantages are especially noticeable in the "very satisfied" category which includes more than half of the entire Strathcona sample. By securing fifty-four point nine percent (54.9%) of the sample in this category, Strathcona County surpasses all of the Studies from the U.S. report. The largest discepancy is with the "Large Urban" category where the Strathcona County sample contains nearly twice as many respondents. Strathcona County fares favourably when the the proportion of dissatisfied respondents is analysed. Despite being marginally larger than the "Small Rural" category, the County is substantially lower than the remaining categories including a rating of fifty-four percent (54%) that of the "Small Urban" category. Since the County houses the majority of its residents in this "Small Urban" category, these differences are interesting.

When examining the sample through intra-County comparisons (Table V.5) a familiar trend emerges. The Hamlet population continually reports significantly lower levels of satisfaction. Moreover, the proportion of the respondents in the dissatisfied category is substantial. By placing sixteen point seven percent (16.7%) of its respondents in this category, the Hamlet population exceeds all of the Strathcona County categories as well as all the categories from the American studies. With further analysis it is apparent that of the respondents reporting a dissatisfaction with the County, twenty-nine percent (29%) reside in small hamlets. This is alarming since the hamlets house fewer than six percent of the total sample.

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[203] Marans and Dillman. 1980. op cit.

[204] The dissatisfied category for the "Small Rural" contains a smaller proportion than does the Strathcona County sample.

The reason for such dissatisfaction is difficult to ascertain. Controls for age, income, and the employment status did not produce the evidence to substantiate causality among demographic variables. However, a correlation does exist between respondent location and suggestions for an improved County. The two sectors which registered the most complaints are (1) Hamlets, and (2) Country Residential. The Hamlet respondents were most likely to be dissatisfied with the condition of the roads. Since roadways are essential to their daily lives, dissatisfaction in this realm may have real effects on global satisfaction. A dissatisfaction with the various services was also reported by the Country Residential sector which complained about the high costs relative to the degree of services afforded their subdivisions.[205]

Table V.5 also suggests that Sherwood Park residents are the most satisfied with life in the County as sixty-one percent (61%) of those respondents fall in the "very satisfied" category. These findings contradict the U.S. studies which produced a negative relationship between the density of the settlements and the satisfaction scores. However, for the Strathcona County study, we must consider the social milieu in which the results were obtained. This high level of satisfaction from the Sherwood Park residents was also witnessed by the preceding referendum examining the satisfaction with the current County system. The carry-over effects of the referendum can be witnessed by some of the respondent's comments such as;. "It's a good County to live in. I'd hate to see separation or city takeover", and "The borders are excellent as they are!" While both the referendum and its accompanying public debates have undoubtedly had some effects on the results, the high levels of reported satisfaction appear independent of one's community. Evidence for this statement lies with the fact the farming community rates highly on the satisfaction scale. If we consider Fugitt's definition of the rural-urban fringe which stresses alterations in the farming community, we might expect Strathcona's farming community to be the most disorganized and thus more dissatisfied. On the contrary, the farming community scores favourably as a large proportion of the sample (46.2%) report great satisfaction, while none of the farming respondents report

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[205] See Table V.10 for the concerns with the County.

TABLE V.4
SATISFACTION WITH COUNTY/CITY AS A PLACE TO LIVE
(percentage of respondents)

Category	Very Satisfied	Dissatisfied
Strathcona County	54.9	3.1
Other Areas[1]:		
Large Urban	28.9	13.9
Small Urban	39.4	5.7
Small Town	38.6	7.9
Small Rural	48.7	2.7

[1] These categories are defined as: *Large Urban* places with a population of 50,000 or more; *Small Urban* population between 10,000 and 49,999; *Small Town* places between 2,500 and 9,999; *Small Rural* places of less than 2,500 residents. Marans and Dillan. 1980. op. cit. p. 5.

TABLE V.5
SATISFACTION WITH COUNTY BY PLACE OF RESIDENCY
(percentage of respondents)

Category	Country Residential	Farm	Hamlet	Sherwood Park
Very Satisfied	42.9	46.2	41.7	61.0
Satisfied	51.0	53.8	41.7	37.5
Dissatisfied	6.1	0.0	16.7	1.4

dissatisfaction with the County. Despite having a large percentage dissatisfied respondents, the Hamlet population reported a relatively high proportion of very satisfied residents.[206]

When satisfaction with the County is analysed with the aid of demographic variables only the age of the respondent plays a significant role in the reported level of satisfaction (*r* =.242, *sig.* = .001). The younger respondents (those twenty-five years or younger), while housing the second greatest proportion of respondents in the very satisfied category, also contain a large proportion of respondents in the dissatisfied categories. The fact that more than ten percent of the repondents of this age category report a dissatisfaction with the County is certainly cause for concern. To compound this result, the same category also contains the greatest percentage of respondents who would be pleased to leave the County. Given the lack of employment opportunities, in conjunction with the lack of accessible and affordable housing, the willingness to leave may be understandable.

Other variables such as education, gender, income and employment status have insignificant effects on the reported levels of County satisfaction. Generally speaking the female gender shows greater satisfaction with the County, while education, employment status, and income suggest no relationship with overall satisfaction scores. One factor which did have a bearing on the satisfaction with the County was the presence of children. Those respondents with children were less likely to report a satisfaction with the County. This is rather surprising considering the fact that the County was reported as a very good place to raise children.[207] Another interesting finding concerned the length of time one had resided in the County. The sole respondent suggesting an extreme dissatisfaction with the County, as well as eighty percent (80%) of those dissatisfied, have been County residents for ten years or more.

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[206] The Hamlet's proportion of very satisfied residents (41.6%) rated higher than all but one of the of the U.S. Studies.

[207] See Table V.10 for the survey results.

Willingness to Move

Another variable included as a measure of overall satisfaction with County life is the reported displeasure associated with having to move from Strathcona County. The question employed to measure this variable was identical to one used in the Burton Study and read; "if you had to move from the County, say for a new job or something, how would you feel?"

After considering this question the majority of the respondents associated displeasure with having to move from the County. Ninety-six point five percent (96.5%) of the respondents reported being sorry to move with a full thirty-seven point six percent (37.6%) of the respondents reporting that they would feel very sorry to leave. These finding are similar to the results from the Burton study which reported 82.9% and 43.2% in the same two categories.[201]

Table V.6 allows us to compare the willingness to move from Strathcona County for the years 1979 and 1987. The results indicate that the similar levels of commitment to the County were reported by both the 1987 and 1979 samples. The differences between the two studies are insignificant and primarily revolve around the proportion of uncertain respondents. By examining the extreme cases it appears that the Burton sample is more committed to the County as a result of larger proportion in the "very sorry" category. The opposite extreme, the "very pleased" category, contains an identical proportion of 1.1% for both studies.

Previous discussion indicates that the age of the respondent has an affect on the willingness to leave the County. Forty-three percent (43%) of those who report pleasure in leaving the County were from the youngest age category. The reason for such a finding may rest with the wording of the the question. By employing the phrase "say for a new job or something", the interviewer may have been leading the younger respondents. One could assume that the younger respondents, having fewer ties to the community, are less likely to report a displeasure with having to leave it. When employment opportunities are the reason for such displacement, this desire to leave the County may be intensified. The relationship of

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[201] These figures differ from those reported in Burton's Final Report as the percentages of respondents are derived only from those repondents who completed the question. Burton chose to analyse the data by including the non-responding individuals in the distribution.

TABLE V.6
WILLINGNESS TO MOVE FROM STRATHCONA COUNTY
(percentage of respondents)

Response	1979	1987
Very Sorry	43.2	37.6
Quite Sorry	39.7	53.8
Unsure	15.9	4.1
Quite Pleased	1.0	1.9
Very Pleased	1.1	1.1

age and migration is also supported through the literature. Lamont et al. (1975) suggest that job opportunities provide the main impetus for migration, with younger persons the most likely to consider migrating.[209] Furthermore, the larger proportion in the willingness to move category may be the result of respondent age differences. The Burton study maintained a higher mean age and contained fewer respondents in the youngest age category merely as a result of the selection process.[210] Both the above factors provide the framework for interpreting the results.

The fact that the two studies were undertaken during two drastically different economic environments may also have affected the results. Kennedy and Mehra (1985) have studied the satisfaction during both economically stimulated and depressed times. Their results suggest that while less than hypothesized, differences were evident.[211] These two studies were also conducted in two drastically different economic environments. While 1979 was certainly a

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[209] Lamont, G.R. and V.B. Proudfoot. 1975. "Migration and Changing Settlement patterns in Alberta," in Kosinski and Prothero (eds.) *Peolple on the Move.* London: Metheun and Co. p. 223-235.

[210] The Burton Study addressed the survey to the head of the household. Whereas the QOL interview was conducted with any household member eighteen years or older.

[211] Kennedy, L. and N. Mehra. 1985. "Effects of Social Change on Well-Being: Boom and Bust in a Western Canadian City", *Social Indicators Research.* p. 101-113.

"boom" period, 1987 might be termed the recovery period rather than the "bust". In any case, the social and economic milieu in which the studies were undertaken may have had effects beyond the migration variable and thus should be considered for all the comparisons.

As the willingness to move is highly correlated with County satisfaction (r = .266, *sig.* = .000), it is not surprising that we witness similar results for the two variables. The similarities include a Hamlet population which reports the greatest willingness to move followed by the Country Residential, Farm and Sherwood Park populations respectively. In addition, the demographic variables of income, education, length of residence and employment status have little effect on the willingness to move variable.

Neighborhood Satisfaction

Fuguitt et al. (1975) have suggested that satisfaction with one's neighbors and neighborhood can have dramatic effects on the community satisfaction scores.[212] Given this realization, the author has included neighborhood satisfaction as an indicator of satisfaction with the County. When neighborhood satisfaction is the dependent variable, the respondents once again report high levels of satisfaction. The fact that this satisfaction was measured through unsolicited means provides additional emphasis. When asked to report the most important ingredient in their QOL, the most often cited reason was a contentment with their neighborhood/community.[213] When specific aspects of neighborhood satisfaction are analysed we can begin to realize the motives behind such satisfaction levels. Table V.7 provides a comparative analysis regarding the levels of neighborhood traffic.

Table V.7 suggests that Strathcona County residents are less concerned with neighborhood traffic than any of the resident groups from the U.S. studies. These results are consistent with the Burton study which suggested that a lack of traffic in the County was one of the most encouraging aspects of County living. When the concern over the degree of traffic

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[212] Fuguitt et al. 1975. op cit.

[213] Forty-four point nine percent (44.9%) of the respondents stating a positive reason for their QOL suggested that their neighborhood/community satisfaction was the most important aspect. see Table VI.9 for a discussion of the most important ingredients for the QOL variable.

TABLE V.7
RESPONDENTS REPORTING HEAVY TRAFFIC IN THEIR NEIGHBORHOOD
(percentage of respondents)

Category	Heavy Traffic
Stathcona County	7.1
Other Areas[1]:	
Large Urban	16.6
Small Urban	10.0
Small Town	9.4
Small Rural	9.1

[1] Figures for these areas are taken from Marans and Dillman p. 67.

TABLE V.8
RESIDENTS UNSAFE ALONE IN NEIGHBORHOOD
(percentage of respondents)

Community	Day	Night
Strathcona County	0.9	8.8
Edmonton[1]	2.2	24.3
Fort Saskatchewan	0.5	14.3
Leduc	0.3	13.2

[1] These figures taken from the 1983 Edmonton Area Study and the 1979 Edmonton Regional Municipal Study completed in Leduc and Fort Saskatchewan.

is analysed across Strathcona's rural-urban continuum we witness predictable results. Sherwood Park residents report the greatest concern over heavy traffic and the farming community or "small rural" sector the least concerned.

Another aspect of neighborhood satisfaction relates to the residents perception of safety. The question used to measure the perception of safety read: "How safe do you feel walking alone in your neighborhood during the night/day?" After considering this question the respondents reported a feeling of safety. The proportion of respondents who feel safe walking alone in their neighborhood at various times of the day is reported in Table V.8. Once again Strathcona County rates exceptionally high when compared to other communities.

Table V.8 compares Strathcona County to its neighboring communities of Edmonton, Fort Saskatchewan and Leduc. The results indicate that Strathcona County residents are less likely to feel afraid walking in their neighborhoods during the night. This figure is substantially lower than Edmonton and marginally lower than both Leduc and Fort Saskatchewan. While the percentage of respondents who feel unsafe walking alone during the day is larger for the QOL study than two of its neighbors, these differences are simply a result of the smaller sample size. Only one respondent suggested an unsafe feeling when walking alone during the day for the Fort Saskatchewan, Leduc and Strathcona studies. The small proportion of the respondents who did feel unsafe reported the nearness to the city, and the spill over of city crime, as the cause.

In addition to the Alberta samples, the QOL study also reported significantly lower figures than the U.S. studies analysed by Marans and Dillman. In the U.S. studies, the lowest fear of crime came from the small rural category which reported as many as 17.3% of the respondents unsafe during the night and an accompanying 1.9% of the respondents feeling unsafe during the day. The other categories reported much higher proportions with as many as 44% of the respondents from urban centres feeling unsafe walking alone in their respective neighborhoods during the night.[114]

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[114] Marans and Dillman. 1980. op cit. p. 71.

The positive relationship between size of the community and the fear of walking alone is also worthy of mention. The respondents from the Farming community were the least likely to report fear followed by respondents from Hamlets, Country Residential and Sherwood Park sectors. While the results were not significant at the .05 level, there was a relationship. This positive relationship is also exhibited in the U.S. Studies.[215]

C. Additional Quality of Life Factors

This study also covered a number of issues derived from the Burton Study which listed the best characteristics of County living. By having the repondents react to specific statements regarding life in the County, the author has gained further insight into the perceived benefits of County living. According to this method, the most important consideration is the existence of an environment conducive to raising children. Sixty-five point five percent (65.5%) of the sample felt strongly that the County was a very good place to raise a family. Conversely, less than four percent (4%) of the sample considered the Strathcona County environment as unhealthy for raising a family. The only other variable which compared with these results was one regarding geographical location. When asked if nearness to Edmonton was a major benefit to the County, the respondents provided overwhelming confirmation. Ninety-five point six percent (95.6%) of the respondents agreed it was important while forty point three percent (40.3%) were adamant in this confirmation.

When we examine the proportion of respondents in the extreme category we see that the nearness to the City of Edmonton ranks as the most significant benefit. This is not surprising given the fact that the majority of residents in Strathcona County are employed in the city. Moreover, since some of the suggested improvements revolve around the lack of available services within the County, it is not surprising that Edmonton (with its host of amenities) was considered a major benefit. The benefit of geographical location is supported through the literature which suggests the proximity to a major centre can enhance the satisfaction levels of rural residents.[216] This fact was also supported by the resident

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[215] *Ibid.*

[216] Fugguitt. 1975. op cit.

TABLE V.9
CONSIDERATIONS IMPORTANT TO COUNTY LIFE
(percentage of respondents)

Statement	Agree	Strongly Agree
Good Place to Raise Children[1]	65.5	31.5
Edmonton is a Benefit	55.3	40.3
Allows for Personal Freedoms	65.9	27.0
Close to Nature	59.3	24.8
Small Town Atmosphere	58.8	23.9
Concern Over Pollution	35.8	16.8
More Parks Needed	36.3	5.8

[1] The results for this question have been recoded for comparative purposes.

suggestions such as: "We like living in the County, we've got all the benefits of the city but we don't have to deal with a lot of city problems." As one might expect, these comments were less frequent as the distance from Edmonton increased.

One major deviation from the Burton study relates to the concern with pollution. Burton reported that the lack of pollution was considered as one of the main benefits of County living. The results from the QOL Study indicate that the concern over pollution has risen dramatically. Not only is there a significant proportion of the population concerned with pollution (52.7% of the entire sample), the fear of pollution was one of the major concerns raised by the respondents when further comments of the quality of County living. The fact that "pollution is a concern" was raised on more than one occasion.[217]

Another interesting outcome from Table V.9 is the last place ranking of the need for more parks in the County. Since parks received a relatively poor rating in the provision of service, one might have expected the respondents to suggest the need for additional parks. On the contrary it appears that while the residents are content with the percent of land devoted to parks, they would prefer more passive usage of those areas.[218]

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[217] See Table V.10 and Appendix B for a additional comments on the pollution issue.

D. Resident Concerns

As expected, the residents were also capable of providing their complaints with life in the County. These complaints surfaced when the respondents were asked for additional concerns with the County.[219] Moreover, many of the concerns raised by the respondents of the Burton study were confirmed through this Study. The three most common concerns focussed on the condition of rural roads, the service-tax ratio, and the degree of pollution. Table V.10 provides a closer examination of the resident suggestions.

"We're extremely dissatisfied with the condition of the roads!"[220] As evidenced by the above quote, road conditions continually surfaced as a major complaint against life in the County and were particularly numerous from the rural respondents. All but one of the twelve complaints levied against the roads came from rural residents. In addition, the respondents from both the Country Residential and the Hamlet populations were the most likely to cite roads as a concern. The reason the Farming sector being relatively unconcerned over road conditions may revolve around usage. Since most of the Acreage and Hamlet population is employed outside of the County, they are more likely to make heavy use of these roads; hence a greater dissatisfaction. It should be noted that this is only one of many possible reasons for the lack of concern from farming repondents. To truely understand the nature of the dissatisfaction with the roads would require further study. In any case, roads have also arisen as concerns in similar studies of community service satisfaction. Chomyn, in a 1983 study of rural Saskatchewan communities, discovered that both the condition and the servicing of roads ranked among the top in perceived needs of small community residents.[221]

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[218] See Appendix B for suggested improvements.

[219] The complaints ran the entire gamut from the displeasure with taxes to the need for additional pest control.

[220] Quote from a respondent.

[221] Chomyn, S. 1983. "Needs For Services in Saskatchewan Small Communities" , Unpublished Masters Thesis. University of Alberta.

TABLE V.10
CONCERNS WITH COUNTY LIFE
(percentage of respondents)

Concern[1]	Number	Percentage
Roads	12	19.7
Taxes(Water Bills)	11	18.0
Pollution	8	13.1
Shopping	6	9.8
General Services	5	8.2
Municipal Government	4	6.6
Swimming Pool	3	4.9
Developers	3	4.9
Other	9	14.7

[1] See Appendix B for the actual resident statements.

The concern over the roads (though cited in other studies), appears to have arisen over the last few years. After the complaints were received about the roads, further probing by the researcher confirmed the fact that the respondents suggested a deterioration of roads over the last five years. This finding is interesting for two reasons. In 1979 Burton discovered that road conditions were a major complaint with life in the County. Eight years later the same complaint resurfaces. It was also interesting to note a respondent dissatisfaction with road conditions despite the good rating the roads received through recent studies. A 1983 study suggested that Rural Strathcona County contains fewer gravelled roads than counties of a similar nature.[222] Moreover, "the main service activity in the transportation category is the improvement and maintenance of roadways".[223]

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[222] The County is superior to the MD of Rockyview, MD of Sturgeon, the County of Parkland, and the County of Leduc when the percentage of gravel roads is examined. Strathcona County has (8%) gravel roads compared with 59%, 73%, 77%, and 79% from Rockyview, Sturgeon, Parkland and Leduc respectively. Alberta Municipal Affairs. 1983. op cit. p. 136.

The second place ranking among complaints was a concern over taxes. While displeasure with taxes has troubled individuals since their inception, two interesting aspects once again emerge. The first involves the Country Residential population and their displeasure with a perceived inferior tax-to-service ratio. This can be witnessed by the following resident quotes. "Taxes are far too high on acreage", and "we need more services for acreage owner's tax dollars." The second aspect concerns the recency of events and their ensuing affect on responses. More than half of the complaints raised over the tax system focussed on a recently imposed sewer and water taxes.

The concern over pollution is also a relatively recent one. Since the study was conducted only months after and alarming report on cancer figures for Strathcona County, a carry-over effect was expected. While only a small minority actually mentioned the report, both the proportion of respondents considering pollution a concern, and the number of concerns suggest that the initial report has had some lasting effects. This is evidenced by responses such as; "I'm not convinced by the cancer cover-up ... we might move because of the pollution." Another resident addressed the issue by suggesting that "more studies must be done on pollution." The concern over pollution was further supported by another respondent who states; "pollution is bad - we won't retire here because of it!" All this despite the fact that the respondents in the Burton Study suggested the lack of pollution was one of the major benefits to life in the County.

Another complaint levied against the County is one which was prevalent in the Burton Study; namely, the lack of shopping. Despite ranking fourth among resident complaints, the concern over shopping appears to have subsided since 1979. While several respondents did suggest a displeasure with the shopping opportunities, there was also a few who chose the opposite stance. The fact that they were interested enough to mention the improved shopping obviously suggests an improvement over past retail deficiencies. Two such quotes include; "The County is definitely improving in shopping", and "while we like the accessibility of the city, we also like the shopping provided here."

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[223] *Ibid.* p. 134.

The only other category to receive a number of complaints was the need for more services in the County. Once again these complaints were extremely varied and ranged from the need for an additional swimming pool to the need for improved public transportation systems.

Perhaps the most significant aspect among the resident concerns is the fact that they were less numerous than the resident accolades.[224] Since the question was asked in a neutral fashion one might expect the disgruntled respondent to be more vocal. However this was not the case for this survey. The respondents were more willing to mention the positive aspects of County life. Once again we see similarities with the Burton Study as the positive aspects of County life far exceeded the negative concerns. The fact that this study was not a response to annexation or other outside pressures, only adds to the significance of the positive findings. This is not to suggest that concerns are inconsequential, but rather to provide a backdrop by which they can be interpreted.

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[224] When asked if "there was anything else they would like to mention about the QOL in Strathcona County", residents were more likely respond positively.

VI. PERSONAL WELL-BEING

One of the major objectives to this research was to gain an understanding into the QOL of the residents from Strathcona County. When attempting to accomplish this task the author relied upon the advice of Aristotle who suggested; "If you want to know how a shoe fits, ask the man who wears it, not the man who made it."[225] As such, a fundamental aspect of the study revolved around asking the residents what *they* considered the most important ingredients in the life's quality. Moreover, by asking each respondent to rate various components of daily life, the author has attempted to move closer to discovering the QOL that is reflected in resident ideals.

In attempting to examine the those resident ideals, this chapter addresses the most important contributors to QOL through both global and domain-specific measures. One of the major means of accomplishing this task is a self-reported analysis regarding QOL. In addition to examining the most important ingredients to personal well-being, the chapter will focus on the demographic variables and their relationship with both of the above mentioned measures. The chapter will analyze this study's results by comparing the data with both American and Canadian QOL studies.

A. Global Quality of Life

As was the case in the delivery of services, the residents of the County report very high levels of satisfaction with life and an equally high QOL. These quotes from Strathcona County residents address the concept of global QOL.

"Our QOL is very good"

"We're very satisfied and are happy living here."

"The QOL is more than adequate"

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[225] As quoted in Aleshire, R.A. 1972. "Power to the People: An Assessment to Community Action and Model Cities Experience", *Public Administration Review*. 32; p. 442.

While addressing global measures, the above quotes also suggest high levels of satisfaction among County residents. Strathcona County residents report high levels of both global QOL and global satisfaction.[226] The following tables provide the results from American and Albertan studies which analysed satisfaction on global realms.

Table VI.1 indicates that while Strathcona County residents are more satisfied than residents from the American studies, they are also more satisfied with life than residents from their surrounding areas. These findings are consistent with the data from the preceding chapter which continually reported high levels of satisfaction in Strathcona County.

When the QOL is employed as the dependent variable the County also reports high QOL levels relative to other studies. Table VI.2, while comparing two studies, suggests that County residents are more willing to rate their QOL positively than the respondents from a U.S. Study. Strathcona County places twenty-six percent (26%) more respondents in the top two categories than does the U.S. Study. A positive QOL is even more evident on the lower end of the scale. The "fair" category from the Strathcona Study contains only a slightly larger proportion of respondents than the "poor" category for the Flanagan Study. The complete absence of respondents in the "poor" category for the Strathcona County study also suggests a more satisfied population. Given these results, it is apparent that Strathcona County residents report high levels of QOL.

Global Satisfaction and Resident Location

When the global satisfaction and the global QOL scores are analysed across the rural-urban continuum, a familiar trend appears. The global scores for both QOL and overall satisfaction report a Hamlet population which is the least satisfied among the sectors of Strathcona County. These differences are evidenced by Table VI.3. In this table the Hamlet population reports fewer respondents in the categories of "excellent" and "very satisfied" for the global QOL and global satisfaction respectively. Furthermore, the Hamlet population is

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[226] The questions which were employed to measure these concepts include; (Question 54) All in all, how satisfied are you these days?; and (Question 55) At the present time how would you describe your overall quality of life?

TABLE VI.1
SATISFACTION WITH LIFE BY LOCATION
(percentage of satisfied respondents)

Community	Satisfied
Strathcona County	93.7
Edmonton	85.5
Fort Saskatchewan	91.4
Leduc	88.7
U.S. Studies[1]	80.4

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[1] These percentages are derived from the mean of *Small Rural* and *Small Urban* categories from the Marans and Dillman Study. Marans and Dillman. 1980. op cit. p.108.

TABLE VI.2
QOL RESPONSES FOR STRATHCONA COUNTY AND U.S. STUDIES
(percentage of respondents)

Category	Strathcona County	U.S. Study [1]
Excellent	22.1	20.0
Very Good	54.4	35.0
Good	19.9	30.0
Fair	3.5	12.0
Poor	0.0	3.0

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[1] The Flanagan QOL Study was undertaken in 1979 on a national sample. Flanagan 1979. op cit.

TABLE VI.3
GLOBAL MEASURES BY RESPONDENT LOCATION
(percentage of respondents)

Measure	Country Residential	Farm	Hamlet	Sherwood Park
Global Satisfaction				
Very Satisfied	49.0	69.2	16.7	54.4
Dissatisfied	2.0	0.0	8.3	2.2
Global QOL				
Excellent	16.3	38.5	7.1	24.5
Fair	4.1	0.0	7.1	2.7

the only category which houses an equal proportion of respondents in the "excellent" and "fair" categories. The remaining sectors house substantially more respondents in the higher categories when both QOL and global satisfaction are considered.

Table VI.3 also suggests that the Country Residential respondents are less satisfied on global terms. The Country Residential respondents contain only forty-two point three percent (42.3%) as many respondents in the "excellent" category, and approximately seventy-one percent (70.8%) in the "very satisfied" category when compared with the Farm population. To compliment these relatively low scores, the same category also contains more respondents on the negative end of the scale. Table VI.3 suggests that the Country Residential sector houses the second largest proportion in the "fair" and "dissatisfied" categories.

In summary it appears that the high levels of global QOL and overall satisfaction reported by Strathcona County residents are dependent on resident location. While the aggregate figures compare favourably with most other studies, there are some internal inconsistencies. The reasons behind these inconsistencies are difficult to address and may revolve around the the satisfaction in the various domains of life.

B. Domain-Specific QOL

Important Components

One of most effective means of inquiry into QOL is to ask the respondents what they consider *important* to everyday life. By following the precedent of a U.S. Study this research has delved into a number of concerns. The questions which were employed in this research reflect the areas analysed in the Flanagan Study. In both studies the respondents were asked to rate the degree of importance according to the following scale; very important, important, unimportant or not at all important. The areas which were analysed include:

1. Active recreation
2. Family relationships
3. Health and safety
4. Challenge of job
5. Close friendships
6. Understanding oneself
7. Material comforts
8. Helping others
9. Creative participation

Table VI.4 allows an examination of the importance of the various areas through inter-category rankings. The table suggests that satisfaction with one's family life is the most important ingredient to personal QOL. This category contained the highest percentage of respondents in the "very important" category with eighty-seven point nine percent (87.9%) of the entire sample suggested that their family relationships are "very important". These figures are higher than the Flanagan Study which considered family relationships as important, but to a much lesser extent.[227]

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[227] While the Flanagan Study separated the various components of the family relationships, none of the components ranked as highly as the Strathcona County sample. The mean of the score of (79.8%) of respondents considering it "important" was considerably lower than the percentage ranking it "very important" in this QOL Study.

TABLE VI.4
RESPONDENTS RATING AREAS IMPORTANT
AND VERY IMPORTANT
(percentage of respondents)

Domain	Very Important	Important	Total
Family Relationships	87.9	11.2	99.1
Health and Safety	86.5	13.5	100.0
Understanding Oneself	76.8	22.7	99.5
Close Friends	73.9	26.6	100.0
Challenging Job	56.0	34.1	90.1
Helping Others	49.8	47.4	97.2
Material Comforts	43.0	54.7	97.7
Creative Endeavors	37.8	51.9	89.7
Active Recreation	36.2	40.8	77.0

The health and safety variable is a very close second when the analysis proceeds according to the "very important" category. However if the proportion of respondents on the positive side of the scale are examined, all respondents from the current study considered the area of "health and safety" important. Similarly, having close friends is considered important by all of the Strathcona County respondents. These findings differ from the results of the Flanagan study which reported 91.8% and only 77.2% in the same two categories.[228] The importance assigned the "close friends" category also differs from a study undertaken in Alberta which suggested the personal characteristics were the most important ingredients in personal QOL.[229]

When the differences between the Strathcona County Study and the Flanagan Study are analysed, a few trends emerge. The results listed in Table VI.5 suggest that with the

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[228] Flanagan. 1979. op cit. p. 229.
[229] Alberta Recreation and Parks. 1983. op cit.

TABLE VI.5
COMPONENTS CONSIDERED IMPORTANT FROM 1979 AND 1987 STUDIES
(percentage of respondents)

Component	Flanagan Study	Strathcona County
Health and Safety	91.8	100.0
Understanding Oneself	86.3	100.0
Material Comforts	83.3	99.5
Family Relationships	79.8	99.1
Challenging Job	78.2	90.7
Close Friends	77.2	100.0
Helping Others	69.7	97.3
Active Recreation	51.3	89.7
Creative Endeavors	48.9	77.0

exception of the "close friends" and "helping others" variables, a great deal of consistency exists between the studies.

One noticeable difference exists in the percentage of respondents who consider the components as important. While the ranking was identical, the Strathcona Study includes a greater percentage of respondents in all of the components. Moreover, the Strathcona Study contains a greater proportion of respondents in its lowest ranked component (active recreation), than the Flanagan Study contains in its six, seventh and eighth place rankings. Furthermore, the first six categories from this study also contain a greater proportion of respondents than the top ranked component of the Flanagan Study. A possible reason behind such a finding may rest with the fact that this QOL study is undertaken on such a homogeneous population. Conversely, the Flanagan study analysed a national sample which is more likely to represent heterogeneous value systems and their ensuing different beliefs.

Interestingly, having a challenging job ranked only fifth and seventh for the Flanagan and Strathcona Studies respectively. Since one's job consumes a considerable portion of one's life, the procurement of challenging employment might be expected to assume a major role in one's life. However such is not evident through these studies. While ninety percent (90.0%) of the Strathcona respondents considered it important, only seventy-eight percent (78.0%) of the Flanagan Study gave it a similar rating.

Domain-Specific Satisfaction

While the importance one attributes to these components is paramount to understanding one's QOL, another crucial factor is the satisfaction one derives from these areas. According to Michalos (1980) it is this gap between the aspirations and reality which produces personal QOL.[230] This section concentrates on the gap between the perceived degree of importance and the perceived satisfaction derived.

When satisfaction with the various components is considered, the family life variable once again assumes the top ranking as a result of placing the greatest percentage of respondents in the "very satisfied" category. By examining Table VI.6, it is evident that more than three-quarters of the entire sample (75.4%) suggested that they were very satisfied with their family life. This proportion is substantially larger than the nearest variable, neighborhood satisfaction, which houses sixty-one point three percent (61.3%) in the same category. It is also more than six times as great as the last place ranking, satisfaction with creative endeavors, which included only eleven point six percent (11.6%) of the sample. It is consistent however, with the Flanagan Study which reported seventy-four point six percent (74.6%) of the respondents in the "very satisfied" category for the family variable.[231]

Since family life is the domain which is considered most important and is also the one receiving the highest satisfaction rating, it should be a good predictor of overall life quality. That is to say, if "gap" theory is valid, high levels of satisfaction among County residents are to be expected, given the congruency between the most important and most satisfying aspects

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[230] Michalos. 1980. op cit.

[231] Once again the mean score of three variables was used for comparisons.

TABLE VI.6
SATISFACTION WITH LIFE DOMAINS FOR 1987 STRATHCONA COUNTY RESPONDENTS
(percentage of respondents)

Domain	Very Satisfied	Satisfied	Total
Family Life	75.4	21.8	97.2
Neighborhood	61.3	30.9	96.2
Friendships	60.3	37.4	97.7
Health	48.2	42.4	90.6
Standard of Living	38.7	54.5	97.2
Challenging of Job	34.4	45.9	89.3
Amount of Time	21.6	40.4	62.0
Creative Participation	11.6	49.9	61.5

of life. Satisfaction with the domains are listed in Table VI.6 where both the proportion of "satisfied" and "very satisfied" are listed.

Table VI.6 suggests that the domains which provide the most satisfaction are also considered the most important. Close friends, health, and family relations are among the top four rankings when satisfaction and importance are considered. While health drops to a fourth place ranking in the proportion of "very satisfied" respondents, it maintained a considerable proportion of satisfied respondents (90.6%). Since the literature identifies the health variable as one of the most consistent predictors of life satisfaction[232], more light has been shed on the high levels of satisfaction among County residents. Additional support for the high levels of satisfaction among Strathcona County residents the results from the high levels for the reported for "close friends" variable. This category assumes the most respondents in terms of both total satisfaction and degree of importance. The results indicate that ninety-seven point seven percent (97.7%) of Strathcona residents report being satisfied with this very important realm.

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[232] Fernandez and Kulik. 1981. op cit.

When inter-study comparisons are made (Table VI.7), Strathcona County once again rates exceptionally high. The proportion of satisfied County respondents is greater than the Marans and Dillman Studies, the Edmonton Area Survey, the Leduc Survey and the Fort Saskatchewan Survey for each and every domains.

While it is unfortunate that comparisons are not available for all of the domains, a recurring trend emerges in the domains where comparisons are available. Strathcona County residents continually score higher than the respondents from all of the other studies. While past research has suggested that most people are prone to rating their QOL positively, Strathcona County residents appear particularly satisfied with the various life domains. Since the sample is very representative of the larger population, it seems unlikely that these high levels of satisfaction can be attributed to a biassed sample. Furthermore, high levels of satisfaction among Strathcona County residents are consistent with other studies undertaken in the area.[233]

When we examine the domain-specific satisfaction according to resident location, the Hamlet population once again reports low scores relative to the remaining sectors. In four of nine domains (66.6% of the domains), the Hamlet population placed the lowest proportion of respondents in the "very satisfied" category. Table VI.8 suggests the Hamlet population is less satisfied with the health, the standard of living, the friendship, and the neighborhood domains.

Table VI.8 also suggests that the Farm and the Sherwood Park populations report the highest ranking for most domains. The Farm population reported extreme satisfaction in the health, friendships and standard of living domains where it held at least a twenty percent (20%) advantage over all other sectors. The extreme satisfaction among the farming community in these domains, when combined with the relative lack thereof for the Hamlet population, provides some useful information in interpreting the global satisfaction scores.

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[233] Burton. 1979. op cit.

TABLE VI.7
SATISFACTION WITH QOL DOMAINS BY RESPONDENT LOCATION

Domain	Strathcona County	Fort Sask.	Edmonton	Leduc	U. S. Studies[1]
Family Life	97.2	96.1	87.5	94.9	88.8
Friendships	97.7	94.1	84.4	94.2	54.2
Health	90.6	87.7	85.9	81.6	49.6
Standard of Living	97.2	87.7	78.3	84.1	31.1
Challenging of Job	98.3	-	-	-	42.3
Amount of Time	62.0	47.2	57.5	-	-

[1] These percentages are derived from the mean of *Small Rural* and *Small Urban* categories from the Marans and Dillman Study. Marans and Dillman. 1980. op cit. p.101.

TABLE VI.8
SATISFACTION WITH LIFE DOMAINS BY PLACE OF RESIDENCE
(percentage of very satisfied respondents)

Measure	Country Residential	Farm	Hamlet	Sherwood Park
Neighborhood	84.6	61.2	33.3	62.8
Family Relations	73.5	75.0	79.6	68.1
Challenge of Job	36.5	50.0	40.0	36.8
Health	55.1	76.9	33.3	39.7
Friendships	61.2	84.6	41.7	52.6
Amount of Time	16.7	46.2	33.3	17.9
Creative Participation	4.9	27.3	9.1	14.2
Standard of Living	34.7	76.9	16.7	34.6

Global and Domain-Specific Satisfaction

Statistical analysis to examine the relationships between the global and the domain-specific measures were undertaken with the aid of correlation coefficients. Table VI.9 suggests that the standard of living, family relationships, friendship and health domains report the most significant relationships with both global measures of QOL. These domains report correlations of .482, .311, .283, and .309 respectively and are all significant at the .05 level. Essentially, these domains are not only among the most important in terms of resident perceptions (refer to Table VI.4), but are also among the most powerful predictors of global satisfaction.[234] It is expected then, that an extreme satisfaction (or lack thereof) in these variables, results in a coinciding level of global satisfaction. Given this logic, one can understand the high levels of satisfaction among the Farm population and low satisfaction among Hamlet populations.

Other statistical tests involve the use of control variables. When controlling for demographic variables age and education of respondents had significant effects on satisfaction scores. A positive relationship resulted such that the greater the age and the greater the respondent's education the greater the reported QOL and global satisfaction.[235] These findings are consistent with the literature which reports positive relationships between both of the aforementioned variables.[236] However, these findings fail to address the discrepancies between the various sectors of the County, as no significant relationships were found when either of the aforementioned variables were correlated with resident location. Other variables such as gender, income and marital status have insignificant effects on the reported level of satisfaction.

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[234] These finding support the existence of a "gap" as discussed by Michalos.

[235] The age variable reports a correlation coefficient of .245 and a significance at the .01 level while the education variable reports a correlation of .227 at a resulting significance at the .01 level.

[236] Refer to Fernandez (1981), Glatzer (1987) and Norval (1981) for discussion regarding the similar findings.

TABLE VI.9
CORRELATION OF DOMAIN-SPECIFIC AND GLOBAL MEASURES

Domain	Global QOL	Global Satisfaction
Family Life	*.244	*.311
Health	*.279	*.309
Challenge of Job	.122	.028
Friendships	*.243	*.283
Free Time	.095	.121
Creative Participation	.045	.026
Standard of Living	*.469	*.482

* Significant at the .05 level.

C. Self Reported QOL

The final measure employed to study the QOL of Strathcona County residents involved a self-reported approach. After answering a fixed choice question rating their QOL, the respondents were then encouraged to provide justification for such ratings. Following this procedure, the responses were coded according to negative and positive realms and further coded according to broad categories within these realms. The ensuing results challenge much of the traditional QOL literature.[237] The respondents from Strathcona County are most likely to report satisfaction with their community as the reason for high levels of QOL. Twenty-one point four percent (21.4%) of the respondents reporting positive justifications for their QOL, stated satisfaction/happiness with their community as the major reason. [238] Table VI.10 allows for a closer examination of the QOL in Strathcona County by listing both the suggested reasons and the their corresponding proportion of total respondents.

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[237] Most QOL studies including Flanagan (1979) and Alberta Parks and Recreation (1983) suggest personal characteristics as the most influential aspects in life's quality.

[238] A possible reason for these findings may rest with the fact that the Strathcona Study made a conscious effort to study the *QOL in Strathcona County* and thus made mention of this fact on several occasions.

TABLE VI.10
REASONS FOR REPORTING POSITIVE QOL

Reason	% of respondents
Community	21.4
Needs/Wants Met	19.4
Family	15.7
Happiness	13.4
Health	10.9
Employment	9.1
Economic	6.0
Relative Position	4.0

While the proportion of respondents reporting community satisfaction contradicts existing research, many of the other justifications are consistent with the QOL literature. Perhaps the most evident and consistent finding from Table VI.10 concerns the satisfaction of needs/wants. This category receives a second place ranking as a result of housing nineteen point four percent (19.4%) of the total responses. This is not suprizing since needs and wants are addressed extensively in QOL definitions. Respondent quotes such as "I don't want for anything" and "I have all of my basic needs met", provide additional support for the existence of such concepts. Another consistency with the QOL research results from the large proportion of respondents suggesting a causal link between happiness and QOL. McCall (1975) is only one example of the strong proponents of the inter-connectedness of the two concepts.[239]

Another consistency results from the proportion of respondents who suggested that their satisfaction with family life was very influential in determining positive QOL. These results are predicable given high rankings afforded the family relations variable for both importance and satisfaction. On the other extreme, poor family relations were also considered to hinder QOL.[240]

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[239] McCall. 1975. op cit.

The negative reasons in QOL rating also support recent QOL literature. Of the respondents who reported a negative reason for their current QOL, forty-eight percent (48.0%) provide reasons which confirm the existence of the gap theory in QOL perceptions. Included in these "gaps" are reported discrepancies between (1) current conditions and expectations, (2) current conditions and past experience, and (3) current conditions and personal aspirations.

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[240] Twenty-two point two percent (21.2%) of the responses reporting a negative effects on present QOL addressed the area of poor family relations.

VII. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

This research intends to contribute a greater understanding of the QOL as it relates to Strathcona County. Moreover, by examining resident perception of the various components which constitute the complex concept of QOL, this research attempts to approach the "quiddity of human welfare and well-being".[241] Most of the findings are consistent with the QOL literature and suggest a highly satisfied County.

The following discussion provides a summary of the results from this study. The two principle measure involve (1) satisfaction with the County (including service delivery), and (2) satisfaction with the aspects of personal well-being. In addition to a review of the major findings, the author discusses the significance of these findings to QOL research. In final sections the author attempts to make some suggestions regarding the maintenance or possible enhancement of the current QOL in Strathcona County.

A. Summary of the Results

If one was to capsulize the perceptions of life quality in Strathcona County in a single sentence, that sentence might read; "We're very happy with the QOL in Strathcona County."[242] These words, borrowed from a respondent, typify the attitudes of the vast majority of people contacted during this study. While there was a small proportion of dissatisfied respondents, this proportion paled in comparison to most other QOL studies.

The reason behind such high satisfaction levels rest with the resident satisfaction in the two major aspects of QOL.[243] The residents of Strathcona County are satisfied on the physical realm including a overall satisfaction with the County; its services and geographical location. They are also satisfied on the personal level; their health and personal relationships.

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[241] Szalai. op cit. p. 9.

[242] Quote from a respondent

[243] Harwood (1976) has suggested that QOL is the combination of both physical and spiritual inputs.

Satisfaction with Strathcona County

1. When the results from the County sample are compared with a the U.S. studies, Strathcona County residents continually report higher levels of satisfaction than their American counterparts. These satisfaction levels are evidenced for both the satisfaction with the County as a place to live, and and the individual aspects which makeup community satisfaction.
2. Strathcona County residents are more satisfied with their neighborhoods than residents from the cities of Edmonton, Fort Saskatchewan, and Leduc. These satisfaction levels appear to be the result of a general feeling of satisfaction with their neighborhoods, as well as greater feeling of neighborhood safety.
3. Sherwood Park residents are the most satisfied with life in the County as sixty-one percent (61%) of those respondents reported being "very satisfied". The Sherwood Park residents are followed by residents from the farming community (46.2% very satisfied), country residential (42.9% very satisfied) and the hamlet population (41.7% very satisfied) respectively.
4. The residents of small hamlets within Strathcona County report low levels of satisfaction relative to the the residents from the remaining sectors. While the proportion of respondents in the upper end of the satisfaction scale is greater than the results from the U.S. Study, the hamlets also contain a larger proportion of respondents in the dissatisfied category. By placing sixteen point seven percent (16.7%) of its respondents in this category, the Hamlet population exceeds all of the Strathcona County categories as well as all the categories from the American studies.
5. When satisfaction with the County is analysed with the aid of demographic variables only the age of the respondent plays a significant role in the reported level of satisfaction. The younger respondents (those twenty-five years or younger), contained a significantly larger proportion of respondents in the dissatisfied categories (10.5%). Conversely, the eldest respondents were the most satisfied with the life in the County (67.9% very satisfied).

6. The length of time one had resided in the County produced a negative relationship with overall satisfaction with the County. The respondents residing in the County for ten years or more were most likely to suggest dissatisfaction with it.
7. Ninety-six point five percent (96.5%) of the respondents suggested they would be sorry to move from Strathcona County, with a full thirty-seven point six percent (37.6%) of the respondents reporting that they would feel very sorry to leave. These finding are similar to the results of the Burton Study undertaken in 1979. The differences between the two studies are insignificant and revolve primarily around the proportion of uncertain respondents.
8. When the services provided by the County were evaluated by their users, the Recreation services received the highest rating. The Library services ranked second followed by Schools, Family and Community, Police, Parks and Health services respectively. When the results from the Fire Department Study are included this analysis, the above services fall two positions as a result of the first and second place ranking of the Fire and Ambulance services.
9. The most important environmental considerations is an environment conducive to raising children. Sixty-five point five percent (65.5%) of the sample felt strongly that the County was a very good place to raise a family. Conversely, less than four percent (4%) of the sample considered the Strathcona County environment as an unhealthy community in which to raise a family. The only other variable which compared with these results was one regarding geographical location. Strathcona County residents provided overwhelming confirmation that the nearness to the City of Edmenton is a major benefit. Ninety-five point six percent (95.6%) of the respondents agreed it was important while forty point three percent (40.3%) were adamant in this confirmation.
10. The three most common complaints with the County included (1) condition of rural roads, (2) the service-tax ratio, and (3) the degree of pollution. The road conditions surfaced as *the* major complaint levied against life in the County and was particularly evident from the rural respondents. Moreover, the lack of satisfaction of rural roads may

be one of the reasons the hamlet population reported a dissatisfaction with the County as a whole.

11. A concern with the quality of life in Strathcona County which has surfaced in recent years involves the issue of pollution. While the lack of pollution was considered as one of the main benefits of County in the 1979 study, the results from the QOL Study indicate that such is not the case in the 1980's. Not only is there a significant proportion of the population concerned with pollution (52.7% of the entire sample), the fear of pollution was one of the major concerns raised by the respondents when asked for further comments on the QOL.

Personal Well-Being

1. Strathcona County residents report greater levels of satisfaction than the residents of Edmonton, Fort Saskatchewan and Leduc when global satisfaction is the dependent variable. They also report higher scores for the global QOL variable than their American neighbors.
2. The satisfaction with one's family life is the most important ingredient to personal well-being. This domain contained the highest percentage or respondents in the "very important" category with eighty-seven point nine percent (87.9%) of the entire sample suggested that their family relationships are "very important". In addition, a large proportion of the respondents who reported negative reasons for QOL suggested that a lack of solid family relations was the reason for not reporting greater satisfaction. Satisfaction with personal health was also important to personal well-being. The health variable placed eighty six point five percent (86.5%) of the respondents in the "very important" category.
3. County residents report greater satisfaction than respondents from all of the other studies when the satisfaction with life domains is analysed. Of those domains close friends, health, standard of living and family relations make up the top four rankings when satisfaction and importance are considered. These four domains are also among the best

predictors of global QOL each domain produced significant relationships with both global QOL and global satisfaction.

4. Of the respondents who reported a negative reason for their current QOL, forty-eight percent (48.0%) provide reasons which confirm the existence perceived "gap" in QOL evaluations. Included in these "gaps" are reported discrepancies between (1) current conditions and expectations, (2) current conditions and past experience, and (3) current conditions and personal aspirations.

To summarize the above findings, it is discernible that Strathcona County residents are very satisfied with life in the County. The County residents appear to be satisfied with both the County as a place to live and the personal aspects which contribute to the overall feelings of life's quality. While there are some intra County inconsistencies, the aggregate levels exceed all other studies analysed. Moreover, the nearness of the communities employed for the comparative aspects of the study add further confirmation to a positive QOL in Strathcona County.

B. Implications of the Findings

The residents of Strathcona County have reported satisfaction levels which rate among the highest levels ever reported. However, while these findings obviously portray the County in an extremely positive vain, they do little to address the more pressing concern of human welfare. Does location on the rural-urban fringe account for such positive attitudes? Does the affluence of the communities under study provide the major impetus for the level of satisfaction? Does the nearness of a major metropolitan centre account for the high levels of satisfaction? While some of these questions are addressed through the major findings, a very important question remains unaddressed. How do these results contribute to our understanding of the QOL?

The fact that the residents from this Albertan county have reported extremely high levels of satisfaction does have implications beyond the County borders. It is felt that one of the most important aspects is the relative nature of QOL. While only a small proportion of the respondents suggested a relative advantage as an indication of their high level of satisfaction, the socio-demographics of the area suggest otherwise. A county whose largest community was originally developed to house labourers from the near by "Refinery Row", has since developed into a county with a resident force from the upper end of the socio-economic scale. Today, Strathcona County contains a distinct lack of poverty, a highly employable work force currently approaching full employment as well as a middle to upper class resident population. If the evaluation process involves relative comparisons, one might expect high levels of satisfaction in Strathcona County. While it is apparent that money may not buy happiness, it certainly helps in eliminating basic needs. Moreover, it is apparent that the elimination of basic needs is essential to pursuit of QOL.

In addition to the aspects of comparative evaluations and basic needs, satisfaction with one's community has also arisen as a important component of QOL. Neighborly relations and the safe communities have combined to provide an atmosphere which was reported as one conducive to child rearing. By further addressing some of the possible health hazards which may detract from neighborhood enjoyment, greater levels of satisfaction may have been reported.

Another aspect which is evidenced through this research is the fact that relationships have played a significant role in the perception of life quality. Solid relationships have contributed to positive personal well-being, while poor relationships have concomitantly been reported as having a negative influence. Since we are basically social animals, such relationships are paramount to our human existence.

The three proceeding paragraphs provide a virtual blueprint of the works of Abraham Maslow. In so doing, it seems safe to conclude that QOL is indeed related to a progression through a needs hierarchy. Upon fulfillment of the lower order needs we move on to confront the continuing spiral of needs. In this affluent and relatively well educated county, most residents have accomplished this feat and thus are involved with the continual process of addressing the higher-order needs. Moreover, many of the residents have come to this conclusion on their own. Statements such as "I have all my basic needs met" and "I have no wants" were raised on more than one occasion as justification for reporting high levels of QOL. In any case, it seems evident that the lower order needs must be satisfied before moving on to address higher needs. While the events of daily living may cause confusion between wants and needs, the quest for QOL remains the same; the realization of the human potential.

The effectiveness of the "standard of living" in predicting global QOL may be one example of confusion between needs and wants. While family relations, close friends and personal health are certainly incorporated in the basic needs, the standard of living variable remains beyond this realm. The fact that satisfaction with the standard of living held the most significant relationship with global measures is interesting. Do middle class populations hunger for greater material wealth?[244] Is the quest for material wealth a substitute for belongingness or self-esteem needs? While these questions are beyond the scope of this study, one respondent was convinced that the affluence of the communities in Strathcona County have led the pursuit of material wealth at the expense of the quest for *quality*. She stated; "the quality of life in Sherwood Park is very affluent. I wonder if with to much money we are loosing some of the finer parts in life."[245] If nothing else, the results from this study offer addition food for thought.

Another major implication from this research concerns the reported differences among the residents of the various components of the rural-urban fringe. Essentially these differences in resident perceptions support the existence of the rural-urban continuum. Though many contemporary authors are willing to eliminate the rural-urban continuum from sociological research, the findings from this study would suggest that they may be over zealous in their assumptions. In this study, resident location had an effect on the perception of both the physical and spiritual inputs with the Hamlet population at the crux of most differences. As a result, rather than a "... thinly-veiled expression of nineteenth-century perspectives"[246], it appears the rural-urban continuum may have application for the the last decades of twentieth century.

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[244] When asking about the standard of living, the materials comforts were stressed.

[245] Quote from a respondent.

[246] Buttel. 1980. op cit. p. 6.

C. Recommendations

While a highly satisfied resident population is consistent with past studies (and is difficult to address other by suggesting a continuation of the current standards), there are some factors which have arisen since residents perceptions were last addressed in 1979. If the municipal government is committed to attaining the QOL reflected in resident ideals, then it is essential that these factors be considered.

The satisfaction levels of the residents from hamlets is an area which certainly should receive further attention. If the condition of rural roads are the focus of much of this displeasure, it should be addressed. Moreover, if the road system in Strathcona County is superior to other counties in Alberta (as other studies have suggested), then it is important make these facts known. In any case, this aspect must be addressed as one of the major benefits to County living is the proximity of Edmonton. The fact that a good rural road system becomes essential for accessibility to the services of the urban centres (including the service centre of Sherwood Park), only heightens the concern.

Another concern which arose from the research is a dissatisfaction of the younger residents who were (1) more likely to be dissatisfied with the County, and (2) more willing to leave. While suburban areas are renown for their family orientated nature and are thus less appealing to the younger residents, the lack of satisfaction with the County from the younger residents is an area which requires further attention. Moreover, though the amenities and services of a larger city are extremely difficult to compete with, the County may want to make the necessary adaptations in order to enhance the attractiveness of the communities within Strathcona County for its younger population.

However, perhaps the most evident and pressing of the resident concerns is the ever increasing anxiety over pollution within the County. In the nine years which have passed since the Burton study, the pollution issue has changed from a positive aspect of County living to become one of its major concerns. While recent cancer reports have undoubtedly affected the resident responses, it is equally as probable that these concerns are not about to dissipate. The results from this survey suggest that pollution in the County is a topic which deserves further study. Since it is an issue which can have devestating effects on both the current and future quality of life, it is one which demands further attention. It is also apparent that this attention must take the place in the form of both further analysis and an ensuing dissemination of these results.

D. Concluding Statement

The general purpose of this thesis revolved around examining the perceived QOL of residents from Strathcona County. Having adequately addressing this objective, the researcher can only hope that these findings will be useful in maintaining or enhancing the current and future QOL of the residents under study. Since the field of Rural Sociology is an applied field, it is hoped that the findings will move beyond political patronage to provide some direct application for improvements within a relatively satisfied county. Without such attempts to improve the current conditions, stagnation may result. This stagnation in turn has the potential to be a major deterrent to those residents' QOL; namely, a dissuasion from "the realization of the human in man".[247] In the final analysis, it is hoped that this study has provided some suggestions as to how both the residents and their municipal government might address the continual quest towards fulfillment, and thus QOL.

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[247] Dobrinov. 1986. op cit.

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Appendix A

Perceptions of Life Quality in Strathcona County:

Interview Schedule

Strathcona County
OFFICE OF THE REEVE
2001 SHERWOOD DRIVE, SHERWOOD PARK, ALTA. T8A 3W7 (403) 464-8000

July 10, 1987

Dear Resident:

On behalf of the University of Alberta and Strathcona County, we wish to advise that a study examining the quality of life within Strathcona County is currently underway. A major aspect of this study is a random survey which will be attempting to understand how the residents feel about their quality of life. Your household has been selected to represent the County and provide this information.

An interviewer will be telephoning your home during the month of July to obtain your opinion. The interview will last approximately fifteen minutes and will be conducted with a female in some households and a male in others. Of course, individual responses will be held in strictest confidence.

We would like to thank you in advance for your cooperation and also wish you a pleasant and safe summer.

Should you have any questions regarding either the interview or the study, please feel free to call the Study Co-ordinator, Dr. D. Gill at 432-4225.

Sincerely,

Jim Common, REEVE
STRATHCONA COUNTY

Dr. D. Gill
Professor, Rural Economy
University of Alberta

'87 ALBERTA SUMMER GAMES STRATHCONA

Hello. Is this the _______________ residence.

(If NO. The number I was calling was _________ and it was for the ___________ residence.)

(IF WRONG NUMBER. terminate with something like: I am sorry to have bothered you.)

This is _______________ from Strathcona County. I'm calling regarding the quality of life study which is taking place in the County. Did you receive your advance letter from the Reeve's Office?

If NO

Well we're doing a study on the quality of life in S.C. and your household has been randomly selected to represent the County.

IF YES

Is there a male/female 18 years or older in the household?

(If NO. Interview the other gender)

Could you take ten minutes to answer a few questions? Great!

(IF NO. Is there a more appropriate time I can call back? When?)

GENDER

MALE..............1
FEMALE..............2

First of all, I would like to get some background information about you.

1. Are you a resident of the County?

Yes ----------1
No ----------2

(Is there a resident in the household?)

2. How many years have you lived in the County

_________ years

3. What year were you born?

____

4. What is your marital status?

Single --------------1
Married -------------2
Common Law ----------3
Divorced ------------4
Separated -----------5
Widowed -------------6
N/R -----------------8
DK ------------------9

5. What is the highest level of education that you have completed?

No schooling --------1
Elementary ----------2
Junior High ---------3
High School ---------4
Trade School --------5
Some College or University -----6
Bachelor's Degree --------------7
Master's Degree ----------------8
Professional Degree or PHD. ----9
N.R. ---------------------------0

6. Do you live

in Sherwood Park ---------------1
in a hamlet --------------------2
on an acreage ------------------3
or on a farm ---------------------4
N.R. ---------------------------8
D.K. ---------------------------9

7. Do you have children?

Yes --------1
No ---------2

How many? ___________

8. What is your occupation at the present?

____

8. a) Where is your employment located

Sherwood Park -------1
Elsewhere in County -2
City of Edmonton ----3
Somewhere Else ------4
N.R. ----------------8
D.K. ----------------9

Now, I would like to ask you about life in Strathcona County.

9. What was the major reason you moved to the County to live? Was it

Job location -------------------1
Lifestyle reasons --------------2
To be near family or relative --3
Housing reasons ----------------4
The quality of Environment -----5
N.R.----------------------------8
D.K. ---------------------------9

If the answer is 2 or 5

a) What are the two most important lifestyle/environment concerns which are satisfied by living in the County?

1. ______________________________
2. ______________________________

10. At the time you moved to this area, did you consider living in any other towns or places in this region?

Yes --------1
No ---------2

a) Which ones did you consider?

1. ________________________
2. ________________________

b) Why did you reject them?

1. ________________________
2. ________________________

11. All things considered, how satisfied are you with life in the County? Would you say you are

very satisfied	1
satisfied	2
dissatisfied	3
very dissatisfied	4

a) What are your reasons for dissatisfaction?

1) ______________________________

2) ______________________________

On a more specific level, I would like you to rate the following services as being either

excellent
good
adequate
or in need of improvements
(repeat options)

12. How would you rate the County library? Would you say it was

excellent	1
good	2
adequate	3
in need of improvement	4
not sure	8
N.R.	9

What improvements would you suggest

____

13. How would you rate the Schools in the County? Would you say they were

excellent	1
good	2
adequate	3
in need of improvement	4
not sure	8
D.K.	9

What improvements would you suggest

____

14. How would you rate the Parks in the County? Would you say they were

excellent	1
good	2
adequate	3
in need of improvement	4
not sure	8
D.K.	9

What improvements would you suggest

____

15. How would you rate the Family & Community Services?

excellent	1
good	2
adequate	3
in need of improvement	4
not sure	8
D.K.	9

What improvements would you suggest

____

16. How would you rate the Recreation Services?

excellent	1
good	2
adequate	3
in need of improvement	4
not sure	8
D.K.	9

What improvements would you suggest

____

17. How would you rate the Health Services?

☐ check if hospital mentioned

excellent	1
good	2
adequate	3
in need of improvement	4
not sure	8
D.K.	9

What improvements would you suggest

____

18. How would you rate the Police Services?

excellent --------------------1
good -------------------------2
adequate ---------------------3
in need of improvement -------4
not sure ---------------------8
D.K. -------------------------9

What improvements would you suggest

____

Now we would like to know how often your household has made use of the services

19. Would you say your household uses the library

Often ------------------------1
Seldom -----------------------2
Never ------------------------3
D.K. -------------------------9

20. The County Parks

Often ------------------------1
Seldom -----------------------2
Never ------------------------3
D.K. -------------------------9

21. Family & Community Services

Often ------------------------1
Seldom -----------------------2
Never ------------------------3
D.K. -------------------------9

22. Recreation Services

Often ------------------------1
Seldom -----------------------2
Never ------------------------3
D.K. -------------------------9

23. Health Services

Often ------------------------1
Seldom -----------------------2
Never ------------------------3
D.K. -------------------------9

24. Police Services

Often ------------------------1
Seldom -----------------------2
Never ------------------------3
D.K. -------------------------9

25. How safe do you feel walking alone in your neighbourhood during the day? Would you say you were

Very Unsafe ------------------1
Unsafe -----------------------2
Safe -------------------------3
Very Safe --------------------4
D.K. -------------------------9

Why do you feel unsafe? Is it

Crime --------------------1
Delinquency --------------2
Police Patrol ------------3
Street Lighting ----------4
Or Something Else --------5

26. How safe do you feel walking alone in your neighbourhood at night? Would you say you were

Very Unsafe ------------------1
Unsafe -----------------------2
Safe -------------------------3
Very Safe --------------------4
D.K. -------------------------9

Why do you feel unsafe

Crime --------------------1
Deliguency ---------------2
Police Patrol ------------3
Street Lighting ----------4
Something Else -----------5

For the next section, I will read some statements and I would like you to respond with either

strongly agree
agree
disagree
strongly disagree (repeat options)

27. Life in Strathcona County (S.C.) provides a small town atmosphere

strongly agree ---------------1
agree ------------------------2
disagree ---------------------3
strongly disagree ------------4
N.R. -------------------------8
D.K. -------------------------9

28. I would not recommend S.C. as a place to raise children

strongly agree ---------------1
agree ------------------------2
disagree ---------------------3
strongly disagree ------------4
N.R. -------------------------8
D.K. -------------------------9

29. The heavy traffic in my neighbourhood is bothersome

strongly agree ---------------1
agree ------------------------2
disagree ---------------------3
strongly disagree ------------4
N.R. -------------------------8
D.K. -------------------------9

30. Living where I do allows me the opportunity to be close to nature

strongly agree ---------------1
agree ------------------------2
disagree ---------------------3
strongly disagree ------------4
N.R. -------------------------8
D.K. -------------------------9

31. Living in S.C. allows for plenty of personal freedoms such as privacy and independence

strongly agree ---------------1
agree ------------------------2
disagree ---------------------3
strongly disagree ------------4
N.R. -------------------------8
D.K. -------------------------9

32. The amount of open space is an important consideration in choosing a place to live

strongly agree ---------------1
agree ------------------------2
disagree ---------------------3
strongly disagree ------------4
N.R. -------------------------8
D.K. -------------------------9

33. Being close to Edmonton is a major benefit for S.C. residents

strongly agree ---------------1
agree ------------------------2
disagree ---------------------3
strongly disagree ------------4
N.R. -------------------------8
D.K. -------------------------9

34. I am concerned about the amount of polution in S.C.

☐

check if cancer study mentioned

strongly agree ---------------1
agree ------------------------2
disagree ---------------------3
strongly disagree ------------4
N.R. -------------------------8
D.K. -------------------------9

35. We need more parks and green areas in S.C.

strongly agree ---------------1
agree ------------------------2
disagree ---------------------3
strongly disagree ------------4
N.R. -------------------------8
D.K. -------------------------9

36. If you had to move from S.C. - say for a new job or something - how would you feel? Would you feel

very sorry to leave ----------1
quite sorry to leave ---------2
quite pleased to leave -------3
or very pleased to leave --------4
N.R. -------------------------8
D.K. -------------------------9

Now, I would like to find more about your interests. Please tell me how important each of the following areas are to you. Your choices are

very important
important
unimportant, or
not at all important

37. How important is participation in active recreation

very important ---------------1
important -------------------2
unimportant ------------------3
not at all important ---------4
N.R. ------------------------8
D.K. ------------------------9

38. Family relationships

very important ---------------1
important -------------------2
unimportant ------------------3
not at all important ---------4
N.R. ------------------------8
D.K. ------------------------9

39. Health & personal safety

very important ---------------1
important -------------------2
unimportant ------------------3
not at all important ---------4
N.R. ------------------------8
D.K. ------------------------9

40. Having a challenging job

very important ---------------1
important -------------------2
unimportant ------------------3
not at all important ---------4
N.R. ------------------------8
D.K. ------------------------9

41. Having close friends

very important ---------------1
important --------------------2
unimportant ------------------3
not at all important ---------4
N.R. -------------------------8
D.K. -------------------------9

42. Understanding yourself - knowing your strengths & limitations

very important ---------------1
important --------------------2
unimportant ------------------3
not at all important ---------4
N.R. -------------------------8
D.K. -------------------------9

43. Material comforts such as good food, a nice home, conveniences and security for the future

very important ---------------1
important --------------------2
unimportant ------------------3
not at all important ---------4
N.R. -------------------------8
D.K. -------------------------9

44. Helping and encouraging others

very important ---------------1
important --------------------2
unimportant ------------------3
not at all important ---------4
N.R. -------------------------8
D.K. -------------------------9

45. Expressing yourself in a creative manner

very important ---------------1
important --------------------2
unimportant ------------------3
not at all important ---------4
N.R. -------------------------8
D.K. -------------------------9

Now for each of the areas could you tell me how satisfied you are with that area.

46. How satisfied are you with your neighbourhood?
are you

very satisfied ---------------1
satisfied ---------------------2
dissatisfied ------------------3
very dissatisfied -------------4
N.R. --------------------------8
D.K. --------------------------9

47. Your family life

very satisfied ---------------1
satisfied ---------------------2
dissatisfied ------------------3
very dissatisfied -------------4
N.R. --------------------------8
D.K. --------------------------9

48. Your health and physical condition

very satisfied ---------------1
satisfied ---------------------2
dissatisfied ------------------3
very dissatisfied -------------4
N.R. --------------------------8
D.K. --------------------------9

49. The challenge of your job

very satisfied ---------------1
satisfied ---------------------2
dissatisfied ------------------3
very dissatisfied -------------4
N.R. --------------------------8
D.K. --------------------------9

50. Your friendships

very satisfied ---------------1
satisfied ---------------------2
dissatisfied ------------------3
very dissatisfied -------------4
N.R. --------------------------8
D.K. --------------------------9

51. The amount of time you have for doing the things you want to do

very satisfied ---------------1
satisfied --------------------2
dissatisfied -----------------3
very dissatisfied ------------4
N.R. ------------------------8
D.K. -------------------------9

52. Your participation in creative arts

very satisfied ---------------1
satisfied --------------------2
dissatisfied -----------------3
very dissatisfied ------------4
N.R. -------------------------8
D.K. -------------------------9

53. Your standard of living - the things you have?

very satisfied ---------------1
satisfied --------------------2
dissatisfied -----------------3
very dissatisfied ------------4
N.R. -------------------------8
D.K. -------------------------9

54. All in all, how satisfied are you these days

very satisfied ---------------1
satisfied --------------------2
dissatisfied -----------------3
very dissatisfied ------------4
N.R. -------------------------8
D.K. -------------------------9

55. At the present time how would you describe your overall quality of life? Would you say it was

excellent --------------------1
very good --------------------2
good -------------------------3
fair -------------------------4
poor -------------------------5
D.K. -------------------------8
N.R. -------------------------9

56. What is the major reason that you say your quality of life was ______?

____

____

____

57. Finally, what was your total household income last year? Was it

less than $20,000 ------------1
20,001-35,000 -----2
35,001-65,000 -----3
greater than $65,000 ---------4
N.R. ---------------8
D.K. ---------------9

Is there anything you would like to mention about the quality of life in S.C. or the questionnaire.

Thanks for your cooperation. If you would like a summary of the results sent to you on the study's completion, we'd be glad to oblige.

____________________ ☐

If yes check if desired!

The summary will be sent out in late October.
Thanks again, Goodbye.

TO BE COMPLETED BY THE INTERVIEWER

1. Quality of the Interview

High Quality ------1
Adequate ----------2
Questionable ------3

2. Respondent Cooperation

Cooperative -------1
Indifferent -------2
Uncooperative -----3

3. Approximate Length of Interview

Minutes

Appendix B

Concerns Raised During QOL Study

Quotes From Residents

1. More industry - should be self sufficient in clean industry.
2. Not satisfied with shopping - must leave County for some things.
3. No Sherwood Park signs from highway.
4. Dissatisfied with neighborhoods - developers are not keeping their word.
5. More services for acreage owners tax dollars.
6. Snow removal is weak - safer driving in the city.
7. More passive parks and picnic areas.
8. Taxes too high on acreages.
9. Building large houses on small lots - feel it will turn into a slum eventually.
10. More snow removal on Village on the Lake.
11. Roads are very busy near compound.
12. Less government.
13. Taxes are reasonable but water bill is high.
14. Dissatisfied with water bills.
15. The Council is egotistical - only interested in big money projects and where they can make their name shine.
16. We need a swimming pool.
17. Bring the school systems together.
18. Control the noise at night.
19. More passive parkland and picnic areas.
20. Dislike sewer taxes.
21. Roads should be improved.
22. Extremely dissatisfied with the quality of the roads.
23. Stress more retail shopping.
24. Quality of life is being inundated with industry - not the control there should be - industry seems to rule the area.
25. Not satisfied with the water supply - should have better access to drinking water.
26. Dissatisfied with roads and pollution.

27. Why aren't builders responsible for drainage upgrading?

28. More studies should be done on pollution.

29. Put a playground on Half Moon Lake.

30. Shopping areas are lacking.

31. Roads need to be improved.

32. Sewage and water system in Josephburg need improvement.

33. Would like more dog control.

34. Bus system needs improving.

35. More swimming pools.

36. Quality of life in Sherwood is very affluent - I wonder if with too much money we aren't loosing some of the finer points in life?

37. Need a handicapped program in Westboro School.

38. More services for the taxes on the acreages.

39. Pollution is bad we won't retire here because of it.

40. Smell from refinery row - not convinced of the cancer cover-up - might move because of the pollution.

41. Elderly need help from the younger people.

42. Citizens still carry the burden of weak decisions of former planners.

43. Dissatisfied with the roads.

44. Could use improved shopping.

45. More communication between residents and Council.

46. Roads in rural areas are in terrible shape especially around Half Moon Lake.

47. Traffic on Beauvista Drive is out of hand.

48. Dissatisfied that the sewer and roads bills are so high.

49. Roads are a concern as are the ditches.

50. Pollution is a major concern.

51. Stop issuing hunting permits.

52. Fix the roads.

53. The taxes are high versus the amount of services.

54. The roads are deteriorating.

55. Taxes are too high.

56. Pollution is a concern - I suffer serious respiratory disease because of the proximity of the refineries.

57. It would be nice to have a hospital.

58. The only thing we can complain about is the poor road service.

59. No services available other than garbage collection.